THE COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT

J. A. SPENDER

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(SECOND SERIES)

EDITED BY

J. A. SPENDER

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THE
COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT
(SECOND SERIES)

CHAPTER I

SOME DOMESTIC PHILOSOPHY

The new material

ABOUT a year after the publication of the "Comments of Bagshot," I received from Bagshot's niece, Molly Harman, another box of her uncle's papers which had since come to light, and which were my property under her uncle's will. This lady's name is mentioned casually in the published papers, but my acquaintance with her was only slight, and I did not think it necessary to consult her in preparing the previous volume. I gather from a letter which accompanied the new documents that she was slightly aggrieved at this omission, and accordingly I invited her to make it good against the time when a selection

of the new papers might be published. In answer, I have received from her two considerable letters which I may briefly summarize before proceeding to the new material. She is pleased to say that I have got some things right about her uncle, but she thinks my portrait of him to be lacking in humanity and colour. No one, she insists, was less in the habit of laying down the law or "ladling out maxims" for the edification of other people. He was both kind and understanding, and, when anything went wrong, ready to make excuses which had not occurred to the culprit. But it is admitted that he had an extraordinary curiosity about little things. There was nothing so trivial in her daily life, says Mrs. Harman, that he did not want to know all about it, and it delighted him beyond measure if, after a night's serious reflection, he could find a way out of some little impasse. She sends me a letter which she received from him on one occasion when she had got herself into a scrape with an old friend whom she supposed to have behaved very badly:

My Dearest Molly,

Walking through a country churchyard last week I saw the most delightful epitaph I ever remember. It was simply this: "George Philip Tyson, died Oct. 7, 1871. He was a helpful man." This is the only epitaph in the world I ever envied, and, if I thought that, after I am gone, you could put it on my grave, I should die a happy man. The "helpful man"

Now I want to help you, but it is very difficult, for you probably won't believe a word of what I am going to say. You will ask, what can *he*, a very old bachelor—more than forty years old—know about girls and their affairs? And upon my soul I don't think I know anything. All the same, let us try this case together. Clearly there isn't a shadow of a doubt that Nina Cornford has behaved disgracefully. Make a little wax figure of her, if you can, and stick pins into it until your fingers are sore. But then melt it all down and keep the wax and the pins till somebody else behaves disgracefully. But don't let anybody ever see you doing it, and when you have done, offer

up a prayer for your own recovery and for blessings on the head of your disgraceful friend.

How to deal with "enemies"

Very well, then, Nina behaved disgracefully, and that helps. Next year somebody else will behave disgracefully, and the year after *you* will behave disgracefully, and every year of course I shall behave disgracefully. I often have, and sad trouble it has made for me. All the same, you won't send her that letter. Because Nina behaved badly that is no reason why you should behave stupidly. You talk about her being an "enemy," and people who are devoted to each other do very often use that word when they fall out. It does seem so exceptionally horrid that people you are fond of should get angry and say odious things about you behind your back. But "enemies" aren't angry people of seventeen; they are old and cold and ugly people of at least forty, deep, cunning, malignant people who plot and scheme and keep quite calm. So never use the word "enemy" about people who are angry with you. If you are worth anything people *will* be angry with you,

and you will do things to make them angry. I never knew anybody worth anything who didn't make people angry with them, and especially the people they like best. Friendships which can't stand anger are no friendships at all. I consider it a great impertinence for a stranger to quarrel with me, but it is often quite a compliment for a friend to be angry with me. It shows that he really cares what I think and say.

I cannot believe, my dearest Molly, that you will ever have an enemy, but, if you have, let me tell you this. The only harm which an enemy can ever do you is to make you betray *yourself*. I have been watching this game of life now for twenty-five years, and I say this is true of every case I have known. I have known very good men and women have enemies—real jealous, vindictive, malignant enemies—but the only harm these enemies have been able to do them is by making them injure themselves, by making them retort foolishly, meanly, vulgarly, as good people will when they lose their heads. If you refrain from this, your enemies will help you when they mean to

hurt you. But it is always a great harm to lose a friend, and there is no stupider way of losing a friend than by calling him an enemy when he is merely angry. Enmity and anger are two entirely different things.

Now, as I said at the beginning, you won't believe a word of it, and I am not sure you won't even say that I am as bad as Nina Cornford. All the same, keep the word "enemy" till you want it, and burn that letter.—Always your loving uncle,

W. B.

Such, apparently, was the more homely form in which "the golden rules" summarized in the previous papers were conveyed in the domestic circle. Mrs. Harman sends me a collection of short and pithy sayings from his letters, some of which I shall give hereafter in their proper place, but one or two may be inserted here to show the human qualities on which she insists:

Sundry Reflections

To bear heart-ache bravely is just as important as to bear tooth-ache bravely, and much more thankless, since he who

achieves it is usually thought to be hard of heart.

You are very hard on poor Mrs. Harrison. Remember the answer of that admirable Frenchwoman who said when asked to criticise a friend: "God alone knows what he has given her; God alone knows what he may ask of her."

Take men and women *for what they are worth*. Do this literally and you will find it to be the law of love. They are worth more than you know.

Be very careful, when you marry, not to let your husband be called unselfish. It is always a reflection on a wife when a husband is called unselfish.

Early in life I had great ambitions. Since I reached fifty I have begun to hope that I shall get through without scandal.

It is absurd of you to think that you can bluff with all the cards on the table. You know everything, and I know everything, and you know that I know and I know that you know. Why then, should we talk to each other with a silly pretence which we

both know to be untrue? Keep your flag flying gallantly, my dear girl, among those who have no right to know, but not to me who have every right to know and help.

The art of happy ending

I know of no gift in life more graceful and serviceable than that of the happy ending. Get it, if you can, my dear Molly, and you will be a jewel among women. The world abounds in miserable people who don't know when to stop, who can't finish a speech and sit down, who can't end a conversation when they have done with it, who don't know how to get out of a room when they have got into it, who can't finish a letter when they have said what they want to say. Keep your eyes open at any evening party and see the unhappy couples who are harnessed together in vapid talk which neither knows how to end, though each is dying to be rid of the other. Compare the perfect ease with which a well-bred woman will move away, when she has had enough, with the infinite embarrassment of most others when they endeavour to escape. An inordinate part of

every one's lifeis consumed in formal civilities to uncongenial persons which cannot be ended without quarrels or pursued without boredom. To save yourself from these without inflicting pain or attracting attention is one of the greatest of the social arts.

But even this is only a small part of the philosophy of the happy ending. The rest you will learn as you grow older, and thank God you needn't learn it yet. Finish your chapters well and bravely, and don't let any of them slop over into the next. Each will be good if you are not always lamenting that it isn't the one before. Men learn that more easily than women, and no man can teach it to any woman. At your age it is a great thing to be a girl and not a schoolgirl, but you won't think it quite so good a thing to be a woman and not a girl. Yet believe me, it will be quite as good if you have the art of happy ending. "Believe me" did I say, but of course you won't believe me, and I should hate you if you did.

Ingredients of happines

There are exceptional men and women who are capable of great happiness and

great misery arising out of personal relations and emotions which are quite independent of their daily circumstances. But for the great mass of ordinary people the ingredients of happiness are mainly two, first to love and be loved, next to have a calling which enables them to do daily what they do best. A decent man will find happiness in any drudgery for wife and children, but the drudgery of the unloved is the most mournful thing in life.

The artist who earns his bread by work which is his daily delight is the supreme type of happiness in work. If he might add to it happiness in love his would be the ideal existence. The Providence which equalizes our lot seems, however, to have invented the artistic temperament in order to blight this felicity

The world grows more and more like an evening party at which everybody shouts at everybody else in order to be heard above his neighbours. The pitch is always being screwed up until the brain becomes paralysed in the mere effort of speaking,

and at the end of it all no one is heard. One spends one's evening in uproarious talk about the weather. If you want to be original, my dear Molly, if you want to be distinguished, there remains only one thing and that is to speak low and walk modestly. That is almost universally remarked in these days.

Bagshot's Bachelordom: a conjecture

Mrs. Harman dismisses with something like contempt all my careful and conjectural explanations of the reasons which prevented Bagshot from marrying. The reason, she says, was simple and radiantly clear to any woman. It was Miss Helen Bramston. I have noticed that women almost invariably explain bachelordom in men by the theory of blighted affection. They seem, to a woman, to resent the defeat of their sex which is implied in the idea of a man's deliberately remaining single. So the story is that Miss Bramston refused to marry Bagshot, and he refused to marry anyone else. They remained close intimates to the end of their lives, and—such was the essential simplicity of Bagshot's character—he found no em-

barrassment in their relationship. Mrs. Harman is convinced that his observations about women were drawn not from her but from Miss Bramston. She remembers that lady twenty years ago, when she was still young, and describes her as extremely handsome and fastidious. Miss Bramston, it seems, wished Bagshot to leave the Civil Service and embark on some vague but brilliant career. She was always urging him to write and to come out into the world. She criticised everything, from his boots to his garden, and Mrs. Harman suspects that his note-books were written for her and shown to her. They quarrelled, says the niece, in a peculiarly intimate way, and took little account of her presence, until, in later years, she began to remind them of it. Miss Bramston died a year after Bagshot, and I have no means of discovering whether Mrs. Harman's conjecture is true, but I am not quite so sure that she is right in supposing that her uncle was not drawing on her for some of his observations about women. "One of the strangest things in life," says Bagshot, "is that no one seems to recognize his own portrait. The other

night I lent Molly a novel which seemed to me to contain a most improving portrait of herself with sundry reflections upon her little foibles and weaknesses. She has just returned it to me with the remark that a terrible old man in it bears an astonishing resemblance to myself. Has she seen my point, and is this her deep retort, or does she really think it? I daren't ask."

CHAPTER II

WEALTH AND LIFE

IN addition to the new papers entrusted to me by his niece, various friends of Bagshot's have sent me specimens of his letters which they think should be included among his "Comments." They are of varying merit, and most of them would only be interesting to his friends; but I propose to include a few which reveal his thoughts on subjects that are commonly in debate. Here, for instance, is a letter written to his nephew Charles a few days after a dinner-party given by the latter, at which, apparently, a rich young man had discoursed at large about individualism and Socialism:

10 *January* 1905.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

The Pearl-stud view of life

Since you ask me, I confess I did smile inwardly at the discourses of your friend

Mr. Whitton the other night. It is really rather absurd for a young man who has so obviously been born with hundred-guinea pearl studs in his shirt-front to preach at large about "the fair field and no favour" and the iniquity of "pampering" the poor. Let your prosperous, self-made commercials talk like that if they will—they have a right to do it, if they choose—but not your aristocratic born rich, who has had the field to himself and a thousand favours.

But now about this individualism and Socialism debate. Believe me, two-thirds of it is a false issue. If you must have these antitheses, make it "the family versus the State," not "man versus the State," for all civilized communities take the family and not the individual as their unit. A logical individualism requires a fair start and an equal opportunity for each individual *within the period of his own life*, whereas the actual unit, the family, is all the time doing its utmost to abolish the boundaries between life and death and to give its own members, with the aid of the dead hand as well as the living, a long

lead and a safe retreat. To get real individualism, the very first thing you would have to do would be to abolish inherited property, and even then you would find all parents, relatives, and friends in a conspiracy to defeat you. It is odd how these things work in circles. Your real individualist would want a death-duty of twenty shillings in the pound and then he would be in an awful fix to prevent the State from becoming Socialist in spending it. It is fortunate for Mr. Whitton that you can't defeat the jolly instinct of the human to mother and father, and coddle and comfort its own brats and pets. For the real individualism you must look to the animals, and it all hangs on being able to turn the young 'uns adrift at or about the age of six months and not knowing them again when you meet them. Every human State is in league with the fond parents in the coddling and comforting business, and always will be.

The Family versus the State

Lucky for Mr. Whitton, and when you meet him again you may tell him that if we ever get this individualism of which he

talks it will be twice as disastrous to him and his kind as anything that has entered the head of Keir Hardie or Sidney Webb. Meantime, you may rely on the family to fight as hard against the "equality of opportunity" of which he talks as against the absorption of its hoards by the Socialist State. I don't blame it; it was there before the State, and it made the State for its own ends. But it mustn't pretend to be practising the bleak virtues of individualism when obviously it is doing its utmost all the time, with the aid and connivance of the State, to shield its own members from the equal competition on equal terms.

Like it, or not like it, you have to swallow the fact that "equality of opportunity" is as impossible in any world that we know as equality in brains or person. Men don't start from scratch; they don't get what they deserve, and only what they deserve, in any material sense; and they never will unless you can imagine them coming into the world without parents, relations or friends, and no generation overlapping

another, and each generation being completely wound up when it departs, so that a clean start may be made with a new one. Then we might do complete justice to each man within the term of his natural life; but, honestly, I would rather be a slave in the present world than a king in that world, even though a great many lucky dogs get twice as many bones as they deserve or as I do. Mankind may not be good enough for Socialism, but it is certainly too good for individualism. Its nature being mixed, it demands what the ancients called a mixed polity.

But, I repeat, the lucky dogs must comport themselves more modestly than your Mr. Whitton. They mustn't flatter themselves that they are where they are by their own genius and shining merit. They mustn't talk gaily about other people being pauperized when that is so obviously what has happened to them. I don't bear them any grudge, but the best thing they can do is to see that the other dogs have at least enough bones not to be under the temptation of envying them their too many. But

seriously, my dear Charles, don't base your defence of the existing order on the ground that it does equal justice in material things to the living race of men, for, if you do, you will be floored. You may say, if you like, that the real prizes of life are not gold and silver, but you can never promise any man that he is going to be rewarded according to his merits in gold and silver, and, frankly, I cannot imagine any state of society in which he could be. Put your society on such a footing that the devil doesn't take the hindmost and you can leave the others to get through the eye of the needle, if they can.—Affectionately yours,

W. B.

Side by side with this I will place a fragment which I find labelled "an imaginary preface to an unwritten treatise," presumably of Political Economy.[1] The object of this

[1] Bagshot, it need hardly be said, never had the slightest idea of writing a treatise on Political Economy, but his niece tells me that he was peculiarly fond of writing prefaces to imaginary books. From what sources he could possibly have obtained the statistics for this imaginary book need not be inquired.

treatise is to restate economic problems in terms of human activity:

An Imaginary Preface

A large part of what is called politica economy is mere plutology—analysis of conditions by which individuals or communities may obtain wealth regardless of the uses to which they may put wealth. Only in so far as it begins to embrace the second of these objects does this study rise to the dignity of political economy, which, being literally and worthily interpreted, is the orderly management of the household of the State. For that, the art of spending is at least as important as the art of getting. If the economists deny this, they should change the title of their science, and suppress a good half of their writings as being outside their province.

If we are ever to understand the social effect of riches and wealth, of luxury and thrift, we must banish from our minds the whole order of ideas associated with commerce and credit, and consider the problem simply as one of human activity and its direction. Is the activity of a community

rightly directed when it is applied inordinately to providing palaces and sumptuous living for a small minority of its members, and not applied sufficiently to providing decent shelter and tolerable subsistence for vast numbers of its members? Manifestly the answer must be that it is wrongly applied, and to plead that extravagance or luxury stimulates trade is merely to say that its malapplication is so fixed a habit that the activity directed to the providing of superfluities could not easily or quickly be diverted to the provision of necessaries and decencies. This is almost always true, and it is folly for a Professor to tell a West-End tradesman that he doesn't suffer when a rich customer begins to retrench. Of course he suffers, and extravagance *is* good for that kind of trade.

Wealth as Activity and Power

Economists have floundered and stumbled in their efforts to prove that luxury is uneconomic, but this simple thought gives the clue. There is no solution to the *economic* problem apart from an appeal to the good of the community. It is perfectly true that employment has grown up around

the luxury trades and that the cessation of spending by the rich throws deserving people out of employment. It is by no means certain, as the economists seem to assume, that if the rich saved their money, instead of spending it, it would be employed as capital for purposes of greater social advantage than their self-indulgence. A large number of public companies are issued every year for purposes no whit more useful from a social point of view than the purchase of roses to adorn a ball-room. What is certain and immutably fixed in the nature of things is that communities which misapply their activities are on the road to ruin. They may defend themselves by appealing to the laws of liberty and property; protest that a man has a right to do what he will with his own, and that to limit his acquired or inherited power of directing other people's activities to his own purposes is theft, spoliation, gross interference with private rights. But if "his own purposes" are not in the long run good for the community or at least compatible with its good, then the com-

munity must inevitably decay, and just in proportion as it prides itself on the security of its credit and property—*i.e.*, in such a case, on its power of protecting its rich men in their misapplication of its own activities.

All the controversies about Socialism and Individualism, or liberty and property, ultimately resolve themselves into this. A rich class has constantly to contend with the subconscious feeling of the community that its activities are being misapplied. The mass of the people are quite unable to find words for this feeling; they talk the conventional language about riches and poverty and transferring *money* from class to class. The Socialists speak of labour as the source of wealth, and some of them seem to imagine that all evils could be cured by redistributing its existing produce, whereas the problem is not to redistribute the produce, but to change the produce by directing the labour into more fruitful channels. It may conceivably be done under a Socialist régime or under an Individualist régime, but the problem in

either case is one of intelligence and conscience in the class—whether of private persons or politicians and officials—which controls the activities of the nation.

I see a demand rising up for old-age pensions, housing schemes, land for allotments and small holdings, and many other purposes which by-and-by will raise serious questions of taxation. All this means the working of the subconscious instinct of the community that its activity is insufficiently applied to the well-being of the greatest number. And ultimately it may be found that there is no way of diverting this activity except by taxing the rich, which will *pro tanto* reduce their power of controlling it for their own purposes, and increase the power of the State to control it for communal purposes. The condition on which this can safely be done is that the new activities shall be thought out and rigorously determined before the old are cut off. To tax wealth for the sake of taxing it before the new expenditure had been determined would be folly and waste, and paralyse instead of stimulating activity.

Hence the extreme wisdom of the old financial maxim that a Chancellor of the Exchequer must take no money out of the pockets of the public which is not allotted to a definite purpose. A statesman never stops one form of activity until he is ready to replace it with another.

A Theory built on a Vision

The conclusion of the whole matter is that political economy, so far from being the dull science, is inevitably and always a theory built on a vision. It can give no help to the State about the management of its household, unless it has behind it an ideal of the State and of the application of its energies. The science of wealth, in so far as it affects men in community, is the science of the power over men. It may hold that the good of the community is best achieved by letting its economic, self-regarding men buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market, or it may hold that the self-regarding man's control of the activities of other people must itself be controlled by Governments acting in the interests of the community; but in either case it must have a doctrine of the com-

munal good. And that doctrine can only be an ideal—some vision, near or remote, of an ordered community directing its activities to the well-being of the whole and its own most perfect self-realization. Thus *political* economy can never be content with the production of a successful plutocracy. The worst State in the world might lead the world in wealth; but if its wealth were concentrated in the hands of a few, that would mean only that these few had a unique power of diverting the activities of the State to the ends which they decreed and which might be and probably would be quite incompatible with the general well-being of its people. The self-regarding man of the old economists is least of all to be trusted as superman.

I propose, therefore, to take the expenditure of different classes of the nation during the last five years and to see what light it sheds upon the direction of the nation's activities during this period. By such an inquiry we may be able to criticise the expenditure of the community as we would that of a single household and see

whether its energies are wisely directed to the welfare of all its members.

* * * * *

Two Mottoes

In the last years of his life Bagshot watched with a growing impatience the jealous comparison of the statistics of trade, which had become the practice with all politicians in the Free Trade controversy. He was not indifferent to that controversy or ever shaken in his Free Trade beliefs, but that both parties should "accept a test by which the worst of nations might be proved the best" was, he used to say, a real debasement of public opinion. At the end of a little handbook of Free Trade and Tariff statistics he has written two mottoes from the Funeral oration of Pericles:

Πλούτῳ ἔργου μᾶλλον καίρῳ ἢ λόγου κόμπῳ χρώμεθα.

[Wealth we employ not for boastful words but as a means of action.]

Ἐπεισέρχεται δε διὰ μέγεθος τῆς πόλεως ἐκ πάσης γῆς τὰ πάντα

[Because of the greatness of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us.]

Note, he says, the order of these words and the splendid emphasis which is thrown on "the greatness of the city." Clearly he means that to the Greek mind it was not the great trade which made the great State, but the great State which drew the great trade to itself.

CHAPTER III

SOME WORLDLY ADVICE

BAGSHOT'S niece, Molly, lived with her uncle almost continuously from her fourteenth birthday until, six years later, she married a young barrister, Charles Harman,[1] who was fortunate enough to possess, in addition to his professional prospects, some private means of his own. Bagshot warmly approved of this marriage, and took enormous interest in all that concerned Charles and Molly and the two children who were born before his death. It would be tedious to fol-

[1] It has been pointed out to me that in the previous volume (Chapter VI) I report Bagshot as saying that his niece "desired to marry a most deserving but wholly unendowed young officer." Mrs. Harman assures me that, while she understands this allusion, and has no doubt that her uncle honestly entertained this belief, he was nevertheless mistaken, and that she never had any thought of marrying anyone but her present husband.

low their relations at length, for they extended to all manner of commonplace things, but from the letters Mrs. Harman has sent me I have selected a few passages which seem to me to possess some interest. Here, to begin with, are two extracts from letters written in 1900, a few months before the marriage, when Molly was staying with her future parents-in-law:

Getting Married

You are going to marry and leave me, and, like the dear child you are, you write that "it will be just the same," and that nothing will ever change your feelings for me. I should be very disappointed if you didn't say it, my dear Molly, and we should both be very foolish if we believed it. You would be vastly indignant if I suggested that you would have to share Charles with his mother, and he won't like it any the better if someone suggests that he has to share you with me. Well, that in itself makes a change, and we shall both be all the happier three years hence if from the beginning we set out to discover the neutral territory we can cultivate together, and don't pretend there are no private preserves.

No secrets from Charles! Of course not; but some innocent things which Charles won't want to know about you, and many innocent things which you won't want to know about Charles—at least, if either of you are half as wise as I take you both to be. Married people are very fond of saying that they have no secrets from each other, but they never say it without causing a little shiver of impatience in the unmarried. Frankly, my dear Molly, the unmarried don't believe it, and the picture which it conjures up is not that of kindred souls revealing themselves to each other, but that of a pair of gossips in a state of agitation lest either should have a tit-bit which the other doesn't share. Granted, by all means, that there should be nothing which a husband *couldn't* tell to his wife, or a wife to her husband, there ought still to be a great many things which neither should tell, and real confidence consists in not wanting to know.

Bagshot was always somewhat concerned about Charles Harman's private fortune, for

he feared lest a certain indolence would lead him to live on it instead of using his considerable abilities to make more. This, from a letter written in 1905, is characteristic:

Thrift and its Limits

Wealth, says Stevenson, "is only useful for two things—a yacht and a string quartette. For these two I would sell my soul. Except for these I hold that £700 a year is as much as anybody can possibly want." It has taken me half an hour to hunt up this passage, but I couldn't rest till I found it after reading in your letter this morning that "£700 a year is ample for two people." So it is, my dearest Molly, provided they remain two, and "except for the yacht and the string quartette." I have known scores of people say the same thing, but there is always an "except," and as the years go on the number of the "excepts" will quite certainly increase.

Now, if I were the model uncle, I should straightway improve this occasion by a suitable lecture on housewifely thrift and self-denial in milliner's bills. Instead of which —knowing your prudence and Charles's

charming, unambitious nature—I solemnly express the hope that you will suffer and make Charles suffer from a passionate craving for yachts and string quartettes. He is a very clever fellow, is your Charles; but having this quite secure nest-egg, he won't bestir himself and make the place for himself that he ought to make, unless you both want things and want them badly. They say the Kaffir can only be kept at the mines when he wants to add a second wife to his establishment. Heaven forbid that your Charles should develop in that direction, and, speaking with all due caution, I don't apprehend it. But don't make it too easy for him, or let him make it too easy for himself. So once more I say, hitch your wagon to the yacht and the string quartette.

Whatever you do, don't show this letter to your friend Nina. She and her Algernon want quite other advice. *They* will try the yacht and the string quartette on the £700 a year—and that way lies tragedy.

A year later Charles apparently was getting

How to deal with the Grandees

on, and he and his wife beginning to be popular in fashionable circles. So, at least, I judge from the following letter:

> You and Charles must arrange these things for yourselves, but, if you really want my advice, you will find some excuse for not staying with Lady C. She is an admirable woman, but she is entirely unable to realize that anyone can have less than £5,000 a year, and everyone you meet at Courtlands will take it for granted that this is your minimum wage. If you could dip in and come out again and take it all as you would an evening at the Opera and have done with it at that, I should say, go by all means and have the fun. But this is exactly what you can't do. Lady C. will introduce you to Mrs. F., who will pass you on to the Duchess of D., who will launch "the charming young couple" in their frail cockle-shell on to the roaring tide of fashionable London. After three months of it, my dearest Molly, you would feel a donkey and be a pauper.
>
> The golden rule in dealing with the

grandees is to be very affable to them when they come into your life, but on no account to let them drag you into their life. Charles is a barrister and hopes some day to go into Parliament. If the Lord Chancellor or the Foreign Secretary were to take a fancy to him, and if the Lady Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary's lady were to be civil to you, so much the better for both of you. That is in your life, and in this society you will be at home. But Lady C. and her friends have really nothing to do with you or you with them, and you will never be more than freaks to each other.

Next year Mrs. Harman writes that Charles is prospering and making more money, but she seems to have dropped a hint that the results on the household budget had disappointed her hopes. Bagshot replies:

More Money and no Richer

It is certainly one of the most disappointing things in life that getting more money doesn't seem to make you richer. All my life I have struggled in vain with the mysterious influence which causes the demand

for commodities to overtake the supply of gold. Whenever I have had a rise in my official salary, the news of it, though a profound secret till the appearance of next year's "Whitaker," has instantly percolated by some secret channel to my cook. Within a week it is known to my butcher, my grocer, my tailor, and to every charitable institution in Greater London. In another week it has been silently intimated to me that all those deserving persons and causes expect a share in the increment to my fortune. Within a month it has become notorious at my club, and I am now confidently invited to play bridge for stakes which a month ago were entirely beyond "poor Bagshot's" means. By this time the very crossing-sweepers have learnt it, and touch me for twopence where formerly I was a doubtful penny. The warm feeling of benevolent wealth now begins to steal through my veins, and I pity myself for the privations I suffered in the days of my poverty. This makes it impossible for me to pass a bookshop, to refrain from taking a cab, to resist my cook, or to avoid going

to the Opera. I am caught in a far-reaching genial conspiracy to share the fruits of my honourable toil, and gently lifted up to a plane of being in which twenty-five shillings is scarcely worth a sovereign. So it will be with you and Charles, my dear Molly, and thanks be to the Lord that it is so, for otherwise what an intolerable, ugly, scrimping, stingy existence it would be! He is a mean man who won't raise the wages of his cook, when he grows rich, because he "can get another as good at the same price." [1]

[1] In one of the note-books I find an incident recorded which has its bearing on this philosophy of wealth: "J. F., just back from China, where he is in the Government service, tells me that the week after his salary was raised last year, his Chinese housekeeper unblushingly presented him with a bill of 120dols. for exactly the same items that had previously cost him 40dols. On his remonstrating and asking the reason, John Chinaman replied that his Excellency was understood to have grown enormously wealthier. J. F. explained that he was not three times as rich but only a third richer, whereupon John Chinaman apologized profusely for having misunderstood the situation, withdrew the bill, and presented a new one for $53\frac{1}{3}$ dols." "The whole of the conflict between economics and humanity," adds Bagshot, "seems to me to be condensed into this incident."

I add yet another passage about the giving and taking of favours:

The Favours of the Rich

You show your usual good sense in refusing to accept favours from the D.'s. They are very rich, and, I doubt not, very good-natured, but they are not *friends* of yours and they will expect in return just what you ought not to give them. If I were a very rich man I should feel it to be a real hardship that I could scarcely ever help my poorer friends in the manner that would be by far the most serviceable to them—*i.e.*, by gifts of money when they really needed it. Nothing at first sight is so puzzling as this rigid rule against the giving or taking of cash. You might suppose it to be invented by rich people to save their pockets, yet I am quite sure it is invented by poor people to save their pride. The rich will give, if you let them; but it is the poor who will despise you, if you take. Only so can they protect themselves against the power of money, for where the rich give and the poor take the former will buy and the latter be bought.

Convention restricts this to money, but it really applies to all gifts, if the giver is not your friend.

A rich man must earn the right to help a poor one, and this he can only do by a friendship in good times and bad so intimate and constant that it wins him the privilege of giving without conferring obligation. I say in good times and bad, for a bad-weather friend may be even worse than a fair-weather friend. To come suddenly to the rescue after years of neglect is taking advantage of a man when he is down. It is only the constant friend who should be welcome as the friend in need. *Never suppose that you can make up to a neglected friend by going to visit him in hospital.* Repent on your own deathbed, if you like, but not on another's.

CHAPTER IV

ABOUT POLITICAL CAREERS

MRS. HARMAN reproaches me for making it appear as if her uncle were always tendering advice unasked, whereas the truth is, she assures me, that he was in this respect the least aggressive of men. I can only plead in answer that, while this entirely accords with my own impression of his character, there yet remain among his papers—which extend over thirty years—the records of two or three occasions on which he did offer advice, and it seems to me foolish to suppress these lest some one who did not know him should hastily conclude that he was habitually officious. So once again I risk this misunderstanding for the sake of printing two letters, which have been sent me since the publication of the first volume, one to a young man, who was a great favourite of his,

The Young Man's career

and the other to an old and intimate friend, giving his views about politics as a career. These need no explanation, and I will leave them to speak for themselves:

Pontresina, *24th August* 1904.

My Dear Herbert,

You ask me to advise you about politics as a career. If I were a wise man I should refer you to someone who has tried it; but, as you say, I have "watched the game" for nearly thirty years, and you are welcome to my impressions for what they are worth.

You have a thousand a year and the prospect of more. If you hadn't, I should advise *you* to drop it and take to any honest bread-winning employment. I have known penniless young men go into Parliament and contrive to keep their flag flying and their pot boiling, but that is not for you or for anyone without a full quart of Celtic blood in his veins. England expects, or at least prefers, that every English M.P. shall have an income to his name, and it is an enormous advantage that there should be no mystery about it.

When you speak about a "political

career," I know what you mean, and please don't trouble to disclaim it. You mean publicity, distinction, fame, steady progress from M.P. to Under-Secretary, and from Under-Secretary to Cabinet Minister. You are very public-spirited, of course, and you write modestly of doing some "decent bit of work as a humble M.P.;" but I know you well enough to be sure that you will break your heart if after five years of the "decent work" you see young Mablethorpe, your contemporary, who is standing for Widdington, become Secretary to the Local Government Board while you remain "humble M.P." So, my dear Herbert, there is misery ahead of you. For I can't promise you anything. Politics is like cricket. You never can be sure that the best bat in the world is going to score, and there are some magnificent bats (at the nets) who have never yet scored in a match at Westminster, and never will. I see around me large numbers of clever men who can make nothing of a House of Commons career, and are silently breaking their hearts over the business. But don't

Politics and Cricket

think for a moment that it is all fluke and blind chance. Taking the average of men possessing good brains and a certain aptitude you will find a definite quality which makes for success. For want of a better name I will call it the "co-operative sense." If you have that, you can at least pass your medical examination; if you are without it, you are like a colour-blind man starting out to paint pictures or navigate ships. You will find that the great majority of clever men who fail in politics are by nature solitary workers. They cannot put their minds into the common stock; they have the artist's objection to letting other people touch their work; they can neither advise nor be advised. The give-and-take of politics and its inevitable compromises seem to them both vulgar and dishonest, and, having got into Parliament, they bore us with incessant complaints about its necessary conditions and the lamentable lapses from philosophy and virtue which they discover in its procedure. So at the outset, my dear Herbert, make up your mind whether you belong to the collective

or the solitary workers, That prize essay you sent me from Oxford last year was charming, and I admired extremely the literary gifts which it displayed. But it raised a momentary doubt in my mind whether nature did not intend you for a solitary worker. However, you have just had a University education, and, as my old uncle in Mincing Lane said to me when I came down from Oxford, it takes a long time to get over that.

Three Qualifications

Let us assume, then, that you have passed your medical examination, and look to Parliament as a place where average men are striking an average of opinion, not as a pulpit for Athanasius against the world. It will still want the best of your ability and more self-discipline than most young men with a literary turn commonly possess. Till you are used to it, you will find it an extraordinary difficult place to work in. You will run in and out of the House, you will gossip in the Lobby, you will find your time cut up into snippets and fragments between the Library and the Division Lobby, the constituent wanting

a ticket for the Gallery, and the score of letters about nothing which you must write every day. I have known men of your temperament lose all faculty of continuous effort after three sessions in the House of Commons. So the second qualification is that you know how to manage the desultory life, and do not succumb to its temptations. The third is that you have an instinct for the seasonable. For the whole of the first Session you will be on the gridiron about your first speech, and you will prepare heaven knows what beautiful sentences and scathing epigrams, to find, when your turn comes, that they are wholly irrelevant. The good House of Commons speaker is always prepared, and always has the courage to throw his preparations to the winds. You may be as eloquent and as clever as you please hereafter, but you will have to earn the right to it by plain speech, which shows that you know what you are talking about and are not a mere pundit reciting a learnt lesson. Your classic definition of the eloquent man as one "who can persuade others that he is likely to know" (τὸν εἰκότα

The Limits of Eloquence

εἰδέναι) exactly suits the British House of Commons, but you scholarly young men mostly forget it.

Let us again leap forward, and imagine you fitted with a constituency and master of the technique of the business. [I will not discourse about that, for I am no performer myself, and I am told already that you are uncommonly clever at it.] You will now begin to think of yourself as Ministeriable. Again don't disclaim it; it's quite natural and honourable and inevitable. But when that time comes, you will feel yourself extraordinarily at the mercy of circumstances and accidents. Men in business and the professions, you will say to yourself, can count on steady advancement and increasing incomes as the reward of their unaided efforts. *You* hang on the chance of keeping your seat, of catching the favour of remote and mysterious beings above you, to whom you are as a fourth-form boy to a headmaster, on the result of a General Election, on the possibility of somebody dying or making a vacancy, for which there will be scores of candidates

and no positive test of merit. When Governments are being formed you will suffer the tortures of the damned, and you will suffer them all the way up to the highest promotion. Nothing will save you but a grim capacity to wait and smile. For from the beginning it is part of the contract that you have no remedy, and the attempt to enforce one will quite surely make your ridiculous. I have known a dozen able men make shipwreck of promising careers from failing to grasp this simple fact, and if promotion is your goal, to grasp it early in the day is the beginning of wisdom and the surest way to get there.

The Tortures of the Damned

A few men arise in every generation who have a genius for publicity. They are like popular newspapers with enormous circulations, and just in the same mysterious way they "catch on" with the public. These defeat all rule; parties must have them, and will pay anything for them, though there is generally a silent movement going on below the surface to prevent them from getting quite to the top. You, my dear Herbert, are not of this kind, and your career will

not be on these lines. It will depend on your being yourself and cultivating your own qualities—on your contributing something tangible and positive to the sum of affairs. I have told you of the flukes and chances of public life, but you are young enough to wait and outlive them all. On the whole and in the long run justice is done, and, for all the croakers may say, it is a great career, and a fine discipline for a man who is honest but not pedantic, and will put away from himself all cynicism and cowardice. But treat it seriously, and don't imagine that you are going to take the place by storm. Only when you get there will you discover whether your undeniable cleverness will enable you to get on.—Your affectionate uncle, B.

The second letter is addressed to a much older man, who was entering Parliament at the age of fifty, after a distinguished career in the public service:

My Dear George,

The Elderly Career

Anything that concerns you must interest me, and I am enormously interested to hear

that you have been chosen as candidate for the Sallerton Division—a choice, I take it, which, in the circumstances of that constituency, is equivalent to a seat for life.

You ask me to tell you "candidly" what I think of the prospects of a man of fifty entering Parliament for the first time after a busy—and let me add in your case distinguished—career in another walk of life. I applaud it wholly and unreservedly, provided he remembers that he is fifty and not twenty-five. We understand each other well enough for me to be able to say that to you without offence. I can imagine no happier or more useful career for a man of your age and standing, *if* he has resolution and sense enough to hold himself aloof from all boyish ambitions and strivings; I can imagine few that would be fuller of vexation and mortification, if he has not this degree of self-control.

As I see it, there are two quite separate kinds of career in Parliament. There is the young man's career rising through under-secretaryships to the Paradise of the Right Honourables; and there is the middle-aged

man's career, which eschews this competition and makes influence with independence its goal. On this latter condition a man of your temperament will find politics a fascinating occupation, and, though he may be in the thick of the fight, it will not disturb his peace of mind. When it is known that you want nothing, other people will want you. There never was a time when the disinterested private member entering politics at your age, and bringing a reputation from another sphere, might have greater influence and power, and seldom a time when elderly politicians scheming for small advancements cut a foolisher figure.

But to you least of all men need I enlarge on this theme. You are a philosopher, and you have no ounce of jealousy in your composition. You will help and encourage the rising youngsters, and give their seniors the last scrap of your experience and counsel without asking so much as a lawyer's fee. And so, getting all the benefits of the public life and avoiding its petty vexations and evil passions, you will prolong your

youth, get taken out of yourself just when the years begin to shut you in, and do another full day's work before you go hence.—Ever yours,

W. B.

CHAPTER V

SATAN THE STATISTICIAN

I PASS now to another of the short essays which I find among the new papers. It needs no explanation.

And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel . . . And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.

I see in the history of the last hundred years an illuminating commentary on this most cryptic of Scriptural incidents. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the various communities of the world lived in a flattering state of ignorance about themselves and their conditions. No great nation knew the numbers of its population, the amount of its trade, its birth-rate, or its death-rate, the proportion of its rich

men and its poor men. Any nation could indulge in any dreams that flattered its vanity, and claim to be bigger, wealthier, and more enterprising than its neighbours, without running the risk of exposure or disillusion; and a grand kind of chivalrous boastfulness about imponderable manly virtues was the mark of patriotism.

Into this romantic fool's paradise comes Satan, the statistician, bringing envy and malice, shattering dreams and poetry, prime author of the deadly prose and ungodly materialism of modern life. He will measure us and hold us up to scorn if we fall short of our neighbours by one inch in stature; he will keep us racked with anxiety lest we cease to grow or our neighbours grow faster; he will insist on the fullest exposure not only to ourselves but to all the world of our delicacies and weaknesses and our sins and shortcomings. When we are strong he will fill us with dread lest we become weak; when we are weak he will fill us with envy of those who are strong. And all the time he will insist that nothing shall count but what can be weighed in his

scales or measured by his rule: and woe betide the country which would cheat him by putting its soul into the scale. For Satan, the statistician, has no mercy on you if you be merely beautiful or gifted; he requires peremptorily that you be plump and sleek and your pockets bulging.

Bagshot cannot run a parable for more than thirty lines, and here he stops, but I find the subject more lucidly developed in several of his notebooks. Thus:

Clinical Thermometers and Fever Charts

Statistics are the clinical thermometers of the modern world. There is an incessant taking of temperatures, followed by jealous comparison of the resulting records, and every patient examines not only his own but every other patient's fever chart. This is a chronic source of jealousy and unrest in the modern world. It tends at times to an almost insane hypochondria, in which the patient declares himself ill beyond recovery, though his appetite is enormous and his growth unceasing.

The habit encouraged by statisticians of weighing quantities instead of measuring

qualities is most debasing to ideals in a modern State. It is habitually taken for granted that a nation must be inferior to its rivals if it falls short of them in population, territory, or volume of trade, regardless of the fact that on two out of three of these tests China would still be the leading nation of the world. Of what use is it to cry out on the vulgarity of worshipping wealth when all the great nations and their statesmen and spokesmen deliberately preach to us that the richest among them is the greatest? The chief need of Europe to-day is to recover the thought that a country may hold the primacy of the world by leading it in ideas and the art of living. But for that we shall have to shut half the Government departments and kill all the statisticians.

There follow certain notes in a slightly different strain about the population question:

Opinion and Population

Nothing is so strange as the varying moods of the English people about the population question. At the end of the eighteenth century, and until the end of

the Napoleonic wars, the prevailing panic was lest oaks should fail for the building of ships and men for their manning. To plant trees and bring forth children were the first duties of the patriotic Briton. The old Poor-law was seriously defended on the ground that the subsidy which it gave to the labourer helped him to marry early and breed quickly. At the end of the war opinion swung rapidly to the opposite pole, and the country fell into a panic lest population should outgrow subsistence. The census of 1801, which showed the population of England and Wales to be 9,000,000, was received with incredulity; that of 1821, which showed an increase of 5,000,000, with consternation. Rich men appealed to the figures as a powerful argument for a policy which would check population; poor men were driven to challenge their accuracy lest too powerful a weapon should be given to the rich. Cobbett imagined that he had reduced them to absurdity by arguing that, if they were accurate, the population of England and Wales would reach the portentous total of 29,000,000 by the end of

the nineteenth century—about three millions short of the actual figures realized. But neither Cobbett nor any of the disputants on either side found courage to argue that the increase was good and ought to be welcomed. For the next fifty years the country remained under the influence of Malthus and his theory, and all the economists and wise men cast about for policies which would check the multiplication of the proletariat and its proles. So late as 1874 I find an old Liberal publicist arguing in a book called "Rocks Ahead" that the one way of saving the country was somehow to reduce its population to 20,000,000.

But the moment the slightest sign has appeared that this object was being achieved opinion has swung again to the opposite pole, and from 1890 onwards most of the newspapers and all the preachers have been in a state of despair about the slightest check in the percentage of growth. At the beginning of the nineteenth century we wanted population regardless of comfort; during the middle of the nineteenth century we wanted comfort regardless of

population; at the close of the nineteenth century we demand both comfort and population. The irrepressible subconscious will to live of the community comes here into conflict with its prudence, and proclaims as death and decadence what the wise men called thrift and forethought.

The above was written in 1903, but there is an addendum dated 3rd January 1905:

Population and Fiscal Policy

These conflicting thoughts lie deep at the roots of the present controversy between Free Trade and Protection. The ideal Protectionist policy implies a self-sufficing state in which there is a perfect equilibrium between population and home produce and a happy adjustment of taste to what can be produced at home. In such circumstances a country produces sufficient for its own needs, and prices are not raised beyond the world level by a tariff which restricts the home market to the home producers. Such a condition is not necessarily the result of a tariff, but a tariff crystallizes it, makes it permanent and, so to speak, registers the decision of the country to be

self-sufficing and independent of foreign supplies. Among modern nations, France approaches nearest to this ideal, producing sufficient for herself of most of the staples of life in years of normal yield, though working on a margin narrow enough to bring her Protectionist system into play, when harvests are bad.

It is absurd for Free Traders to deny that this ideal has its merits and its attractions, and may be worth the sacrifices it involves, if steadily and clear-sightedly pursued. But inevitably it implies a static conception of national well-being, and is incompatible with any growth of population which would disturb the equilibrium between the numbers to be fed and the feeding capacity of the country. In France alone is this logically worked out, and we see Protection going hand in hand with a law of property which discourages large families, with the result that her population remains stationary, or only grows in the degree in which the equilibrium can be preserved.

Where this equilibrium has been lost and

cannot be restored, the growth of population must sooner or later bring a demand for free imports. England was driven to it in 1846, not by argument but by clear perception that her population had outrun her capacity to supply herself, and she definitely made her choice between the ideal of growth and the ideal of self-sufficiency. Germany, with her smaller population per square mile, and the United States with her vast unexhausted territories, have still a long way to travel before they definitely reach this imperative decision, but reach it they must, if their populations continue to grow, and then they will have to make up their minds whether, like France, they put "Full" outside their doors or take down the barriers which prevent the produce of other countries coming in to feed their multitudes.

There are infinite degrees of Protectionism and Free Trade between the two ideals, and at various stages the conflict resolves itself into a struggle of interests striving to maintain the barriers against a population which has outgrown them, or of divergent interests which want some barriers removed

and others maintained. But the bitterness of the struggle lies precisely in this fact that *the interest in maintaining Protection becomes greatest at the moment when the need to remove it is most imperative.* It is just then that the Protected interests are reaping their largest profit.

The mischief of Infant Industries Protection is precisely this, that it tends to impose a stationary ideal upon a country just at the moment when it most needs expansion. It may enable a complete microcosm to be established in a new country, but the very perfection of the protected small State is fatal to its growth. It is thus that a few people make a small thing of a great country.

Let me here promise and undertake that from now till I have done with him, Bagshot shall say no word more on the fiscal question. I add, however a passage about France and Germany from another notebook which raises the same question:

Too imaginative to blot out the memory of the lost provinces, too much wedded to her own refinements in the art of living to

Conflicting Ideals

compete successfully with her neighbour in numbers and brute force, France at this moment presents the supreme instance of conflicting ideals. Unable to forget her wrongs, and unable to avenge them, she is obliged to seek peace, while dreaming of war. The census forbids the *revanche*; pride and sentiment will not let the wound be forgotten. Common-sense cries out for acceptance of the inevitable, but there is no Frenchman who can persuade his countrymen to accept the gross fact of modern Germany. For years to come, so far as one can foresee, this impossible loyalty to a lost cause will remain the governing fact in the politics of Western Europe, and the point of danger for the friends of France, as well as for France herself. Fantastic and unpractical as it may seem, I confess to taking a certain pleasure in watching the dominance of an idea, and the confusion which it brings to all policies founded on the belief that man is governed by self-interest. For all material purposes the French dream is disastrous to France, but all Europe is under the spell of it, and there

will be no escape from it in my life-time, or till I have long passed from the scene, and the Latin races have been finally vanquished by the Teutonic in the struggle for numbers.

CHAPTER VI

A BATCH OF LETTERS

Advice to Controversialists

I HAVE a bundle of letters before me, written during two Swiss holidays (1898 and 1900), which range over many subjects in a desultory way. So let me just run through them and cull a few passages at random. Here is a letter to Charles Harman about a newspaper controversy, in which that rash youth appears to have involved himself with a literary man:

> Good for you, Charles! If you are getting the worst of it in an argument with a literary man, always attack his style. That'll touch him, if nothing else will. I have tried it once and again myself, and found it infallible.

Another letter a fortnight later returns to the subject, and by this time, I gather, Keats had been dragged in, for Bagshot writes:

Consolation for Keats

If Keats was really killed by a "Quarterly Reviewer," he is surely much more than recompensed by the immense consolation which his martyrdom has afforded to inferior writers under the lash of criticism. Unfortunately, it does not follow that, because some great men have been belittled, the little men who get their due are great. But don't, I pray you, destroy that illusion.

A letter to Mrs. Harman contains this message to "Tom"—a cousin of hers who had been enjoying himself at Oxford, and, apparently, got into a scrape:

> Tell Tom from me that "ragging" is either a great insult or an affectionate familiarity. There is nothing between the two. But you must know a man very well indeed before you put him into a horse-pond.

The same letter contains an avuncular rebuke to Molly herself:

> You say you "can't afford not to hit back." But are you really so poor as all that—so poor that you actually have to

"repay him with his own coin," having none of your own? Do, I beg you, my dearest Moll, consider what bankruptcy these phrases imply.

A week later he is philosophizing *more suo*:

I got into talk to-day with a Swiss peasant, and he told me a very interesting thing. If you manure an Alpine meadow you destroy the Alpine flowers. A very few, like the crocus, are strong enough to survive both freezing and coddling, but the average hardy plant is killed by it. Aren't they just like humans?

Fear God, yes, but don't be afraid of Him. *Il y a des gens dont il ne faut pas dire qu'ils craignent Dieu mais bien qu'ils en ont peur.* I have that down in an old diary of mine, but with no name to it. Do, please, tell me who said it.

Passing out of Time

Have you ever thought of this—that, if we pass out of time when we die, there need be no separation at all for those who go hence. The moment of our departure may literally be the moment of our reunion

on the other side with those who stand watching around our death-beds; for their earthly life also may have passed in the eternal instant of our death and awakening. The reflection has its drawbacks if we are minded to escape from some earthly connexions; yet even in the timelessness of eternity one may hope for some synchronization of kindred spirits which may enable one to escape a reunion with J. or B. by the equivalent of a thousand years. I revel in the thought of an existence in which one may be a million years late for dinner and one's spiritual hostess politely remark that it is nothing.

Yet another week and he is arguing again with Charles Harman about literature:

The limits of Classical Literature

Let it be boldly said that a large part of the literature which is called classical is entirely second-rate, and has only been kept in nominal existence because the authors of it have achieved a merited immortality by a small quantity of first-rate work. For this reason the student of literature should always be encouraged to ex-

press his own honest opinions and preferences apart from the glamour of names and reputations. Herein, as a rule, he can rely on no sure guidance from the established teachers and critics, who resemble and even exceed the theologians in the reverence that they pay to orthodox traditions.

A kind of demi-theology grows up around a demi-god. Shakespeare, for instance. There are orthodox schools and modernist schools among the Shakespeare theologians; and even a school which denies his existence. That is the highest compliment of all, and has been paid to no other *man* except Homer.

Tests of Style and Originality

If you would test your admiration for an author's style, take a passage at random and copy it out. How much that is merely glittering falls to pieces under this test; how the pen splutters and stumbles over this solecism, that awkwardness, this loose construction, that vulgarity! The spurious will often deceive the eye when it will not bear to be written.

It is good discipline to write lawyer

fashion without stops. Try it when you feel yourself getting involved or losing grip of the logic of writing. A sentence which needs stops to show its meaning or to clear it of ambiguity is structurally a bad sentence, and should always be rewritten.

One of the delightful things about literature is that an author may borrow without being in debt. Shakespeare borrowed hugely, but is scarcely ever in debt. The literary purloiner, unlike the common burglar, is excused precisely in so far as he is able to make what he steals his own. It is evidence for the defence that he has melted down his haul. To be branded as a plagiarist is merely to have failed in this essential appropriation.

The next batch of letters deals with certain incidents about which Mrs. Harman appears to have consulted him:

Advice to his Niece

Tragedy, my dear Molly, the philosopher will tell you, is not a conflict between right and wrong, but a conflict between right and right. And that applies exactly to the case of you and M. You were quite right

to do what you did, and she is quite right in resenting it. On that basis you may come together again hereafter, if you both desire it, but on no other. Don't for a moment think I am blaming you. There are occasions in life when it is quite impossible to avoid giving pain. This, I am sure, is one of them. But don't make it a grievance because M. is offended. She would not only be less than human but positively inhuman if she weren't.

* * * * *

The Best of Both Worlds

One of the things that puzzle me most in life is the extreme anxiety of the emancipated to be accepted by the conventional. There is Mrs. F., who ran away from her first husband, and, having been divorced, has now settled down with F. six miles from Bradlow. She is outraged because conventional people, who have not been divorced, will not "receive" her. The whole neighbourhood rings with her complaints. She wants the entire code of the marriage laws altered to suit her case, though what good it would do her, since under the present law she has got her

divorce and got her re-marriage, I can't conceive. For aught I know she may have had very good reasons for running away with young F. That is between him and her and both and their Maker. I don't presume to judge the case. But that, having done it, she should want to re-enter the circles of the unemancipated, to whom the whole affair is necessarily a challenge and an outrage, seems to me the *ne plus ultra* of feminine perversity. If exclusion from that circle was too high a price to pay for her adventure with F., why, in the name of common-sense, did she venture it at all?

From the next batch, addressed again to Charles Harman, I select two inverted moralities:

Some Inverted Moralities

Punctuality is one of my worst vices. If I make an appointment, I simply must be there at the exact moment; in this respect I work automatically, like those queer people who can wake themselves at an exact moment of any hour in the night. But nobody else, I find, is ever there; so it comes about that I have wasted more

time from this single cause than from any other in my life. Thus is virtue rewarded.

Another copy-book maxim has also played havoc with my life—"never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day." Under the influence of this pestilent morality, I am for ever letting to-morrow's work slop backwards into to-day's, and doing painfully and nervously to-day what I could do quickly and easily to-morrow. If you are an artist, take your time and all the time there is; if you are just a common grubber like me, don't begin till you must finish—in short, never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow.

Next let me insert the portrait of a certain E. S., to whose identity I have no clue:

A melancholy Man

E. S. is staying here, and his presence has considerably damped my spirits. He is a blameless man, but wears a haunted look, as if he were expiating some crime in a past existence. His conversation is to match, and he makes the lightest remark with an air of profound affliction. Among other things he is persuaded that nearly

all the married women of his acquaintance are living terrible lives of hidden tragedy —from which I judge that he is considered by women to be a very sympathetic man. He has Röntgen-ray eyes, which detect skeletons in double-locked cupboards. Till I talked with him I never for a moment suspected the appalling number of eminent and distinguished people whose lives are blighted by horrible secrets. He is no scandal-monger, he is only very very sorry for the mass of misery which these eminent ones have to bear unconsoled. Before he had been here a week he had found out all the horrid things which had happened within a radius of ten miles during the last fifty years, and now I cannot go for a walk with him but what he points out this smiling hamlet as the scene of a gruesome crime or that peaceful chalet as the stage of an unsuspected domestic tragedy. I am trying to invent a story to tell him about myself, for I am sadly conscious that I am incomplete in his eyes until furnished with a melodrama of some kind, and if I cannot think of a suitable one myself he will quite

certainly think of something extremely unsuitable *for* me. Last night he followed me up the Col to see the sunset, and the afterglow suggested the disagreeable thought to him that a miasma of human misery was steaming upwards from the groaning world. Happily he departs on Wednesday, or I should have to move elsewhere.

Let me wind up this chapter with a few shorter passages:

You speak better than you know about S. I like to hear it said of a man that all his swans are geese. Throughout my life I have noticed that the men of whom this is said have a high proportion of swans to their geese.

If we could all manage each other's money affairs, instead of having to manage our own, what a world of trouble would be saved! Everybody is afraid for himself, and everybody thinks his neighbour's fears ridiculous, as they generally are.

I like the idea of a public trustee, but

there is yet another official whom I even more desire to see established, and whom I will call the official taker of responsibility. What blessed holidays we should have if, before starting, we could just go to his office, and for a small fee dump down on him all our worries and anxieties, all our fears about our money or our work, all that we have pledged and promised to perform, all that we sha'n't do or haven't done; and jump for a space into a new world without past or future. The joke of it would be that, when we came back, we should find as a rule that the official had lost or mislaid a considerable part of our most treasured anxieties. That, indeed, would be a special part of his miraculous duties.

The Taker of Responsibility

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT POLITICS IN GENERAL

AS I have already explained, Bagshot's vocation as a Civil servant prevented him from taking part in politics, while it gave him special opportunities for forming a judgment on public affairs and public men from within. He had been private secretary to more than one Minister, and had spent numberless hours in the Lobby and under the clock in the House of Commons following debates which affected his Department; and being wholly without the bureaucrat's impatience of popular assemblies, he was a shrewd and unprejudiced critic of debates. It is, I know, supposed in these days to be a sure sign that a man is not an "advanced thinker" if he is a believer in party government; but I cannot disguise the fact that Bagshot was a believer, and a staunch be-

liever, in the party system. I have in my possession a letter from him written a few months before his death, an extract from which will bear quoting:

The Complaint of Party

Do let us realize that an unorganized democracy is powerless against every kind of tyranny, and that the only organization possible in public affairs is that of parties. What your despot hates is not a mob of voters, but organized parties of voters. Nothing is easier, as history proves, than to get a plebiscite for a tyranny from an unorganized mob. Those, therefore, who wish to destroy parties wish, whether they know it or not, to disarm democracy, for the party is its only effective instrument of action. I have noticed throughout my life that the people who inveigh against party government are almost invariably hostile to popular government. What they have in their minds is a government of superior beings, bureaucrats, aristocrats, or intellectual persons calling themselves Socialists —a thing which I profoundly abhor.

As a purely intellectual exercise you or I

might sit down and invent something superior to the British House of Commons and the British party system: but honestly I don't know where this better thing exists. If the party system is bad, is the group system better, and, if not the group system, shall we find salvation in abolishing groups and parties and leaving every man to go his own way without guidance or hindrance? Your House of Commons would then be a mob of 670 non-party men. The idea fills me with terror, but, whatever other results might follow from it, this I regard as certain: the 670 would be at the mercy of any little group which acted together, and about this group the despised party system would inevitably come into existence again. For this is the law of all assemblies which have the power to act as well as talk. "Parliament," by the way, is a misleading word. The House of Commons is not a talking-shop, but an Assembly which *acts* through debate.

Solitary Thinking and Combined Action

The root of the matter is that your politician is everywhere and always a man who *acts* in association with others. His party

may be large or it may be small, but in either case it will fetter his liberty of action. He may think as much ahead of his party as he likes and as much behind it as his conscience will allow, but he must act with it or break with it and join another. Whether parties are few and big or many and small depends entirely on the varieties of opinion in a country, and since the British people commonly take simple and massive views, their parties are few and big—which personally I think to be an advantage. But in either case the condition of being a politician at all is that you submit to the discipline of your party or group. Many excellent men are incapable of this. They have a conscience or a temperament which compels them to differ from all the parties. Abundant opportunities are open to them for influencing their neighbours, and if we ever do have a real critical, revising Second Chamber, we may open the door to some of them by proportional representation. But it is folly for them to complain that they are shut out of a particular kind of career the essence of which is action in combination.

When a man says that his conscience prevents him from combining with his neighbours, we may praise him and admire him and encourage him in all possible ways to communicate his solitary thoughts by speech or pen, but we cannot be expected to distress ourselves because he is excluded from a career in which combined action is essential.

The Instinct of the British Crowd

Bagshot, I may add, had an enormous respect for the judgment of the British people, and I have heard him say that, looking back over the General Elections of his lifetime, he considered the popular verdicts to have been without exception right and just, and even the size of the majorities to have been delicately adjusted to the equities of the case. I find at the end of his copy of Gustave Le Bon's "La Foule" a rather drastic comment on that Gallic analysis of collective hysteria. The British crowd, he says, "has an admirable instinct *for so much of an idea as will work*. They will praise the rest, cheer the rest, and make a popular hero of the visionary who will give them a dream, but only for what will

work will they go to the poll. This is what the electioneerers mean when they say that their meetings are no clue to the election. Long may the distinction between cheering and voting survive in this country."

The new notebooks abound in observations about public affairs. In 1896 I come upon a passage too long to quote, in which he is shaking his head over certain school-books which had come into his hands, and which taught that the British Empire was irresistible and all-powerful. "On the contrary," he writes, "the duty of the British Empire, as of all nations, is *to discover the limits of its power and to work within them.* It can be irresistible on its own ground and in its own element, but provided always that its policy is not so spread as to bring it into collision with others who are irresistible on their ground and in their element. It is absurd that the present generation should be taught out of books which assume the state of Europe to be the same as it was after the battle of Waterloo." There follow some observations about armaments:

A Note on Armaments

Armaments are like bullion in the bank on which diplomacy draws cheques. It is pure hypocrisy to pretend that they are only an insurance against war. They are for almost every country the foundation of its policy in time of peace.

A relative of mine devoted several years of his life and many thousands of pounds to inventing a process for rendering gunpowder non-explosive. His enterprise was completely successful, but he discovered too late that nobody wanted non-explosive gunpowder. Some people did not want gunpowder at all, but those who wanted gunpowder wanted it to go off. In vain did my uncle explain that the gunpowder which he had rendered non-explosive could by another process, be restored to its explosive condition.

My relative's ingenuity seems to me an exact parable of the proceedings of the Governments of Europe. They accumulate vast stores of gunpowder, and then hold Hague Conferences to see if they can render it non-explosive. They spend millions on ordnance, and millions more on paying

statesmen and diplomats to prevent the ordnance going off. Everybody assures you that his own gunpowder is non-explosive and that everybody else's gunpowder is highly dangerous. I know nothing to meet the case but the universal application of my relative's invention.

Another note about British policy may come in here:

The Island Policy

The Englishman not only lives in an island, but wherever he goes he seeks to reproduce the island condition. From my youth upwards the whole purpose of British policy in the East has been to make an island of India. It is not enough that she is isolated by mountains; there must be buffer-States to prevent her boundaries from touching those of any Power which might desire to possess her; there must be an absolute veto on all continuous railways which might link her up with Europe and the West. In Africa we use Belgium and Portugal to isolate us from Germany; in America we watch jealously lest there should be the slightest breach in the Tariff

wall which isolates Canada from the United States, and deplore the omission of which Providence has been guilty in not providing an ocean to divide the two countries. The true Englishman shudders at the thought of living in physical contact with a great and powerful neighbour, and will not permit even a hole to be burrowed from Calais to Dover. Hence the elaborate apparatus of neutral zones, buffer-States, guarantees of independence for small nations to keep big ones at arm's length, and other isolating devices which are the peculiar contribution of Great Britain to the diplomacy of the world.

Some Fallacies

I come next to a series of observations on the fallacy of arguing from the particular to the general:

When there is a run on a bank, it is prudence for one depositor to get his money out, if he can, but it is madness for all the depositors to make a simultaneous rush for all the money.

It is wise for one brewer to buy one public-house to protect himself from the

competition of other brewers, but it is madness for all the brewers to buy all the public-houses with the idea of protecting themselves from each other. If all the brewers do it, they are paying a great price for what was already theirs before they bought it. One brewer may increase his trade by acquiring a tied house, but all the brewers cannot increase their trade by buying all the houses.

It is wise for one trader to protect himself against competitors, if he can; but it is folly for all the traders to try to protect themselves against all their competitors. For one man's competitor is another man's customer, and when they have all collectively excluded their competitors, they have also shut out their customers.

Similarly the armaments of Europe are for all the nations madness and for each nation imperative. It may, therefore, be very useful to organize an international movement against them, but it is useless to agitate against your own Government for doing what other Governments are doing.

Compromise and Equivocation

I pass from this to three notes about compromise which are worth recording:

Very few people are able to make the essential distinction between a compromise and an equivocation. A compromise is a real mean between two extremes which both parties will accept as a basis of action; an equivocation is a verbal formula which can be so interpreted as to enable both parties to retain their original position.

The articles of the Church of England are less a compromise than an equivocation. They are so drafted as to enable one party to maintain that they are Catholic and another party to maintain that they are Protestant. They represent, therefore, not a compromise on which the two parties can unite, but a formula which enables them to go their separate ways under an appearance of unity.

A large number of the constitutional compromises which figure in English law and history are of the same character. They have served the practical purpose of masking or concealing conflict, but they

are interpreted by each party with a mental reserve which may declare itself surprisingly in a moment of strain.

Here are certain observations about the trend of social politics:

The Problem of the Educated Native

I smile to myself when I hear the Western man speak of "the problem of the educated native" as if it were a special affliction of the Government of India. The arrival of the educated proletariat is precisely *the* problem of all the Governments of Europe, and in the next thirty years it will be every bit as perplexing in London and Berlin as it now is in Calcutta.

Chamberlain's doctrine of ransom is perfectly sound, and all the Governments know it. I know it in my own department. When Society guarantees the weak rich in the possession of their property, it is obliged to find compensation for the strong poor. And that in all States alike is the beginning of Socialism.

Vox populi, vox Dei? No, indeed, my friend, or you and I would have to turn

The Impatient Idealist and the Unconverted

our coats every time it brought our political opponents into power. And yet I can imagine a man holding at one and the same time that his own views were right, and that the country was right in rejecting them. For the idea which is right for him only becomes right for the community if and when the community *wills* it. The impatient idealist is for forcing his doctrine on the unconverted, which is a worse mistake in politics than in religion.

One of the most engaging points about modern political leaders is the elephantine clumsiness of their efforts to deceive. I have seen a dozen grand tactical manœuvres in my times, but not one of them could have deceived an intelligent child.

When a political party sells its soul, it never gets paid. The operation of dishing the Whigs has always been fatal to the Tory Party.

I find that I have far from exhausted my material, but I must reserve the remainder for a later chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE ABOUT POLITICS IN GENERAL

AMONG Bagshot's notebooks I find one labelled "the optimist's vade-mecum." It consists entirely of passages culled from books and speeches thirty years old and upwards predicting imminent disaster for the Empire, decay of British trade and energy, dwindling of population, eclipse of faith and morals, and so forth, His niece tells me that whenever a modern pessimist came out with a peculiarly dismal foreboding he would fly to the "vade-mecum" and cap it with a parallel passage of exactly the same import fetched from the lumber of a previous generation. Among the letters which have been sent to me is one to a correspondent in the Indian Civil Service who had expressed his disapproval of certain language heard at the Indian National Congress about a remote

future when India would be a "free and independent Sovereign State." To which Bagshot replies:

Questions which cannot be answered.

You might as well be angry with Macaulay's New Zealander. The British Empire will go, in India or elsewhere, when there is something better to replace it, and by that time you and I will be able to take a celestial and impartial view of human affairs. So, pray, don't let yourself be disturbed by Mr. Bengali Ghose, or whatever his name may be. You ask me what *I* think will be the "ultimate future of India." I tell you frankly I haven't the slightest idea; but I do know that a vast deal of unnecessary worry is caused in politics by asking questions which cannot be answered. That morbid habit is at the root of most international jealousies, and not a little of your troubles in India. What a paradise this world would be if the nations would only keep pace with the day's work, which is far too much for most of them as it is, instead of worrying about what may happen to them thirty years hence. I like

to think of you sitting in your District Court administering British justice; and if you want advice I will give it you in eight words: Give them the law and cut the prophets.

To a friend in the diplomatic service who writes to him about Anglo-German difficulties he replies:

Some Vices of Diplomacy.

The first thing a Foreign Minister should do when he fears a rival nation is to instruct all the Embassies and Consulates to be studiously polite to it in small things. I trust no man to stand for the important things unless he knows how to yield the unimportant with a good grace. You diplomatists seem generally to reverse this process. The word goes round that Germany or France is dangerous, and straightway there sets up a trivial and chronic irritation, in which the Governments assail each other with pin-pricks and all their emissaries set to work to find something sharp to scratch with. It would be great folly if you were really as desperately afraid of each other as you make out, but that I take leave to doubt.

The same letter winds up with an observation which is not less true now than when it was written:

> The chief mischief in European affairs at this moment is that strategy has become the master instead of the servant of policy. The German General Staff has imposed its military conceptions on all Europe, and the policy of each country is a manœuvring for positions in imaginary wars invented by Staff Colleges. We shall have no rest until the strategists are again brought under the control of the statesman.

I pass now to sundry observations about affairs which I must take at random:

> Beware always, says a Russian writer, lest your ideals become your idols. Patriotism is a great ideal, but jingoism an ugly idol.

> The greatest fallacy in politics is the assumption that the will of the people is something constant and definite. When the Conservative Party claims that the House of Lords stands for the will of the people it generally means the will in re-

action. All progress depends on catching and fixing the public in its *best* mood. The Second Chamber that we need is one that will check a rash impulse but never thwart a good one.

Two things are commonly said about democracy—first, that it is fickle; second, that elections are lost or won by a small minority of select people who transfer their votes from party to party. These are much praised for their sobriety, steadiness and moderation.

If this is true, the fickleness rests not with the mob but with the select few.

Inverted Epithets.

In politics the meaning of many epithets is exactly inverted. A politician is called courageous when he tells his party in sonorous language what it wants to hear; and he is called timid when he resists what they desire. It requires no courage in politics to attack an opponent, but often a great deal to tell the truth to your friends. For this reason the martial epithets which politicians apply to each other are mostly nonsense.

What threatens this country is not extreme opinions but stupid opinions. The British "intellectual" who prides himself on his moderation seems to possess a whole arsenal of hundred-ton arguments in favour of stupidity.

In the human conflict there are two classes of combatants, one fighting under cover, the other fighting in the open. The first never see their opponents; the second are constantly engaged in a visible duel. The first work in offices, studies, counting-houses, consulting-rooms; the second in the Law Courts, the Stock Exchange, the House of Commons. In deciding a profession the first and most important question to answer is whether you are by nature a worker under cover or a fighter in the open.

Of all the open-fighting careers politics is the most ruthless and the most exacting. It is a fight in which your friend more than your enemy is a competitor for the prize you seek. Hence for the ambitious man the society of an opponent is more restful than the society of a friend.

The competition of the politicians is as if all the actors (and actresses) in London were performing together in the same theatre.

Dr. Johnson said of a man marrying a second time that it was the triumph of hope over experience. When a new Government comes into office the public achieve a similar victory.

Two Classes of Politicians

There are two classes of politicians—those who use extreme language about moderate proposals, and those who use moderate language about extreme proposals. In dealing with the British people it is better that your language should be most moderate when your proposals are most extreme.

The debate on Socialism belongs to evolution and not to politics. It may be—and, personally, I think it highly probable—that most societies will in course of time evolve a Socialistic structure; but the idea that people calling themselves Socialists can do it by legislation is absurd, and

simply argues an ignorance of the limits of legislation.

Nothing ever suited the English people better than the union of Church and State in the person of Mr. Gladstone. Uniquely he combined in his own person the clerical and political offices—never so much of a politician as to cease to be a preacher, never so much of a preacher as to forget that he was a politician. John Bull likes a pious politician just as much as he dislikes a political cleric.

There is no subtler way of flattering a retired official than to criticise his successor in office.

If the absent are always wrong, a rejected alternative is nearly always right. We know the evils of what is, but not the drawbacks of the might-have-been.

When I hear a traveller dogmatizing about the character of the native—how he loves being beaten, despises those that are kind to him, admires those that oppress him—I say to myself that, though I have

no idea what kind of man the native may be, I am sure he is not this kind of man. *Never accept from anyone an account of a man which inverts human nature.*

A passage from a letter to a friend in 1905 about the cost of Empire may be quoted in this place:

A warning about the Empire

Do remember that for the great mass of people who toil morning and evening to fill their pots and keep a roof over their heads the running of an Empire must always be part of the decorative and not of the necessary side of life. The individual working-man will get his bread in a little State as in a big State, and whether he lives in an Empire or in the Republic of Andorra. It is a great thing that he should have enough pride and sentiment and imagination to wish to spread his flag and expand his race, and I wish with all my heart that we may never have to expose the latent disinterestedness of the British people in these respects to the crude test of a cash account. But if you want to avoid that you must not make it

too hard for them. You tell me quite gaily that you "foresee a time when it may be necessary to add fifty millions a year to the naval and military expenditure of the country," and you seem to think that it doesn't matter. I will only say in answer that if you do it in such a way that the working-class are heavily burdened by it, you will run a serious risk of their telling you that the Empire is a luxury that they cannot afford. If the finding of this money is a necessity to the Empire the rich must see to it that the poor are not hit beyond a certain point, for in no other way can we guard the Empire at its heart.

Bagshot was a warm admirer and partisan of France at a time when she had fewer friends in this country than at present. I subjoin a characteristic comment on the final stage of the Dreyfus case in 1904:

In praise of France

I have just been reading Matthew Arnold's Essay on "Numbers," with its indictment of the French for the loss of their Germanic and Hebraic qualities, for

their failure in moral ideals, their devotion to the goddess of Lubricity. And now comes the Dreyfus case with its thrilling spectacle of a whole nation doing penance for a single act of injustice, doing it drastically and logically, in sublime loyalty to a moral idea. I can imagine other nations letting Dreyfus go free or granting him "the King's pardon"; I can imagine other nations compensating him handsomely; I can imagine other nations compounding with the man to bury the scandal; but I can imagine no other nation seriously, solemnly, and fanatically reversing the whole process of conviction and punishment down to the restoration of the last button on the torn tunic and doing it proudly and openly in the presence of the whole world on the very spot where the victim was degraded. It is magnificent, and I wish I could think that my own country was capable of this thing.

A Criticism of France

Side by side with this I ought to place a further entry a year later concerning other French characteristics:

I was in Paris last week and saw my old friend M. de B. This little dialogue took place between us:

I: "How is General P.?"

M. de B.: "Ah, poor man, he is *un homme fini*."

I: "But how so? It is not six months since I read in the *Temps* that he had had a great success and was generally acknowledged to be one of the most distinguished soldiers in France."

M. de B.: "What? haven't you heard of his great misfortune?"

I: "No, tell me."

M. de B.: "It was at the great review, and he was passing the President's box at the head of his troops. Just at the saluting-point his horse—bucked, do you call it?—and he came down head over heels, in plumes and uniform. All Paris roared with laughter, and from that moment he is nothing any more."

I: "But, my good man, you don't mean to tell me——"

M. de B.: "But, my dear friend, I shall never make you understand the French

people. *Le ridicule tue tout en France.* The General P. is *un homme fini.*"

"If, which Heaven forbid, France ever came to ruin," adds Bagshot, "the epitaph which would have to be written over her tomb would be simply that—*Le ridicule tue tout en France.*"

CHAPTER IX

HEREDITY AND HEALTH

THROUGHOUT his life Bagshot took special interest in speculations about heredity and health, and there are among his papers various fragments on this subject which look suspiciously like drafts for letters to the newspapers. I suppress these, since they have possibly appeared before, and pass to a longish entry in his diary for 1902:

A Hygienic Dialogue

A worthy and zealous man, calling himself a Eugenist, paid me a visit the other day with the special object, so far as I could discover, of deterring me from matrimony —which I was by no means contemplating. I listened to him, I hope, with patience and politeness, and, when he had done, there followed this brief dialogue:

I: "You are of opinion that insanity in a family should be a bar to marriage?"

Eug.: "Most certainly."

I: "And Alcoholism?"

Eug.: "Assuredly."

I: "You are of opinion that a tuberculous or phthisical tendency makes marriage undesirable?"

Eug: "Highly undesirable?"

I: "You are of opinion that cancer in a family should be considered a bar?

Eug.: "In almost all cases."

I: "You are of opinion that hereditary nephritis makes a very undesirable condition?"

Eug.: "Undoubtedly."

I: "You think that a perityphlitic appendicitic family had better be avoided?"

Eug.: "Certainly, if possible."

I: "And still more a paralytic or apoplectic family?"

Eug.: "Of course."

I: "Well, then, my dear Sir, can you tell me the name of any friend of yours or any member of your own family whom you consider qualified for matrimony?"

Eug. (after long reflection): "Humph! Well, to tell the truth, I never thought of it that way."

* * * * *

My Eugenist was a very honest and a very simple man, or he would have found means of parrying my attack. But clearly Eugenics cannot be worked this way, or in our zeal for the best stock we should extinguish the race.

Where my Eugenic friend goes wrong is in failing to realize that a great many of the maladies which he calls degeneracy are the just too much of the highly developed nervous system which is the special endowment of the gifted families. Overcharge the battery ever so little and genius becomes insanity; give one member of the family a volt too much and the delicate balance of physical and mental qualities on which sanity depends is broken down. Extinguish the family and you will rid the world of some degenerates, but you will also and at the same time rob it of its most gifted men. My Eugenist would never have let Cowper, Lamb, Coleridge,

Stevenson, Keats, Ruskin, Henley, or De Quincey see the light.

* * * * *

The Limits of Heredity

The doctrine of heredity should never be forgotten by parents or remembered by children. To the first it is the assertion of their responsibility; to the second a reminder of their helplessness. Fortunately our Darwinians and Weismannians have between them left the doctrine in such a state that it is prudent for parents to believe the worst and possible for children to hope the best. There is no man of science who will dare say that the child of the drunkard *must* take to drink, and none that will venture to tell the drunken parent that the child *won't* suffer.

The longer I live the more I am convinced that the most enviable hereditary endowment is a strong will. Let a child have the will to live and the will to be well, and he will kill a thousand hereditary devils. All the Eugenics in the world will not give us this, and too much Eugenics may give us the athlete of Plato—ἀνδρειότερος, αὐτὸς αὑτοῦ,

but also μισόλογος καὶ ἄμουσος (twice the man he was, but a hater of philosophy and uncivilized).

A year later I found another entry on the same subject:

Thirty years ago it was customary to hear solemn people talking gloomily about hospitals and medicine and philanthropy as so many ways of interfering with the natural process of eliminating the unfit. Yet constantly in my time the standard of life and health has improved with the spread of these agencies; and it is now certain that almost all that the scientific men used to say on this subject is riddled with fallacies. The diseases which medicine has combated—cholera, typhus, smallpox, typhoid, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria—swept away fit and unfit, and were, if anything, rather more destructive to the fit than the unfit. It is almost a proverb that the weak survive and the strong succumb to typhoid and enteric. The breeding power of men on a low standard of life and health is unlimited—witness India and China—

Fit and Unfit

and none of the natural scourges make any serious impression on it. Biologically, the elimination of the unfit is almost useless, unless you can do it before they reach the age of parentage, and that involves exposure of infants and wholesale slaughter of the young and defenceless. It is useless to construct a theory on the assumption that men can or ought to behave as tigers and wolves. We have to consider what man, being man, can do on human conditions to improve the race of men. This banishes once and for all the *elimination* of the living unfit by human effort. Nature may do it, God may do it; man cannot do it. Man's effort is to give men health and leave the rest to God or nature.

Can the Eugenist, then, do nothing? Certain things, I think, provided always he remembers that the loveless scientific marriage is as likely to defeat his purpose as any mismating of the unfit. But it is a doctrine for match-makers and not for lovers. The lovers will laugh at you whatever you say. But persuade the match-makers—parents, guardians, aunts, friends

A Doctrine for Match-makers

—that it is crime and folly deliberately to arrange a marriage between two young people who have each of them the same hereditary weakness and you will in time make some impression. Make it an offence which may void marriage for either of the parties to have concealed the existence of a disabling infirmity or hereditary taint and, again, you may do something. And if at the same time you can persuade the young people that to live a godly and sober life is the condition of becoming good parents, you will do still more. Personally I have yet to be convinced that what a man can do for himself is not twice as important as what his grandfathers and grandmothers have done for him.

Let me add to this a letter which Bagshot wrote in 1898 to a friend who asked him to subscribe to a health society and sent him various pamphlets and leaflets dealing with "degeneration":

My Dear Bernard,

If it were, indeed, true, as your friends seem to believe, that, in spite of all our

efforts in sanitation and hygiene, the race was steadily "degenerating," we might as well give up the whole business and leave a doomed people to fight it out with the slum landlords. Personally, I don't believe a word of it. Every precise inquiry that we have had on this subject proves that degeneracy is the result not of town life or country life, but of certain conditions of living which may be present in either, and may be removed from both. It existed in the old villages under the poor-law, and it exists in many villages to-day. It will not be caused by taking people into the towns or cured by removing them into the country. It will be cured in town or country by giving them decent food, enough air-space, unpolluted water, suitable clothing, and, above all, by saving little children from work and worry until the time of growing is over. When I was a young man, I spent a great deal of my time among the poorest class of town labourers and in visiting the miserable dwellings which they call their homes. I have seen typhus in their midst; I known what their death-rate was, and

the proportion of their degenerates and consumptives; and nothing will convince me that the standard of health has not greatly improved during the last twenty-five years, or that the declining death-rate means nothing. You and your friends have classified a great many diseases which passed unnoticed in former times, and you have brought a grand scientific terminology —and, let us hope, a corresponding ameliorative process—to bear on them. And because your process is modern you rush to the conclusion that the things themselves are new. By all means go on with your process, for we are only at the beginning of the health movement; and by all means stir people up to the mass of avoidable physical suffering which is inflicted on the world, but don't tell them that degeneracy is a modern complaint, or you will inevitably undermine their belief in the measures that you propose.

Country Life and Town Life

I should like to see you take out of your literature all your complaints about "town-life." They are futile and they run to cant. Country-life is no more natural

to men than town-life and to large numbers of men no more healthy than town-life. You will not get a high degree of intelligence out of a purely rural population; you are not even sure of a high standard of physical health. If you doubt this, go to Russia or Eastern Prussia or the West of Ireland. Man needs to live with his neighbours, but with sufficient elbow-room to enable him to be alone. Your ideal is the *rus in urbe*—not to take the town people into the country, which you will never do, but to establish the country conditions in or about the towns, which you can and must do. Concentrate then, upon your suburbs and open spaces and garden cities, and a hundred years hence we may have a population which will be getting all that the mind needs of the town-life and all that the body needs of the country-life.

National Hypochondria

In the meantime, much as I honour your doctors and health-workers, I do see a danger in fixing the attention of the country upon its health. Whatever else you do, I hope most fervently that you won't infect

the working-class with the kind of valetudinarianism which afflicts nearly all the well-to-do in these days. But there, I needn't trouble my head about that. The working-class, simply because they are a working-class, can't afford the kind of medicine which, as Plato says, "educates disease." By the way, if you have forgotten it, look up that admirable passage in the third book of the Republic, about the system of Herodicus and the method of the carpenter.[1] It is great good sense and as modern as can be.—Sincerely yours,

W. B.

[1] Herodicus, being a trainer and himself of a sickly constitution, by a happy combination of training and doctoring, found out a way of torturing, first and chiefly himself, and, secondly, the rest of the world.

How was that? said Glaucon.

By the invention of lingering death; for he had a mortal disease which he perpetually tended, and as recovery was out of the question, he passed his entire life as a valetudinarian; he could do nothing but attend upon himself, and he was in constant torment whenever he departed from his usual regimen, and so dying hard, by the help of science, he struggled on to old age.

A rare reward of his skill!

Yes, I said, a reward which a man might fairly expect who could not be made to see that, if Asclepius did not

To the same correspondent he writes a few months later:

> Why do you talk as if it were of enormous importance to the world that clever and intellectual people should multiply indefinitely? Nature knows better, Their comparative infertility is her device for keeping them within bounds. They are the salt of

instruct his descendants in valetudinarian arts, the omission arose not from ignorance or inexperience of such a department of medicine, but because he knew that in all well-ordered States every individual has an occupation to which he must attend, and therefore has no leisure to spend in continually being ill. This we remark in the case of the artisan but, ludicrously enough, do not apply the same rule to people of the richer sort.

How do you mean? he said.

I replied: When a carpenter is ill he asks the physician for a rough-and-ready cure; an emetic or a purge or a cautery or the knife—these are his remedies. And if any one tells him he must go through a course of dietetics, and swathe and swaddle his head, and all that sort of thing, he replies at once that he has no time to be ill, and that he sees no good in a life which is spent in nursing his disease to the neglect of his ordinary calling; and therefore, bidding good-bye to this sort of physician, he resumes his customary diet, and either gets well and lives and does his business, or, if his constitution fails, he dies and has no more trouble.—PLATO, *Republic*, III, 406, Jowett's translation.

the earth, you say. Exactly, and the earth, like soup, is spoilt by too much salt.

I grant you, however, that a different question arises about property. The comparative infertility of the propertied classes tends to a concentration of property in the hands of a limited caste—which an indefinitely multiplying proletariat will not tolerate as a permanent condition. The men of property must multiply if they are to abate the edge of envy.

W. B.

CHAPTER X

RELIGION

IN this chapter I propose to put together a few passages on religion which I find in various letters and notebooks. The first is from a fragmentary diary of the year 1902, and is dated Sunday, March 30 (Easter Sunday of that year):

The Athanasian Creed and the Litany

By a rare chance I happened to hear both the Athanasian Creed and the Litany in the same church to day, and in an extraordinary way they seemed to me to express the intellect and the heart of the Christian religion. The creed is a stupendous struggle between reason and a dream full of menace and terrible history, though the rustic choir takes it at a cheerful hand-gallop. Every line of it is drenched in the blood of martyrs and heretics. Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Teuton have fought

desperate battles for the last word. Thousands have died for it, thousands more have suffered incredible tortures and agonies, lest a shadow of doubt or schism should fall upon the least of its mystical definitions. I see in my mind's eye the mournful procession of heretics—Docetist, Monophysite, Nestorian, Arian—passing across the stage of history to be crushed and damned by the triumphant Church and the militant defenders of her faith. I see armies mobilized, countries laid waste, men, women and children put to the sword, dynasties cowering, Popes thundering, and all the world subdued to the fierce passions of the intellect and its terrible zeal for the unattainable, incomprehensible truth—vision alike of man's unconquerable mind and of the desolation wrought by his idealism and fanaticism.

And then in the Litany we pass suddenly to the religion of the heart, the religion pure and uudefiled, which visits the widows and orphans in their affliction. The pride of the intellect sinks, and all humanity becomes one in a lowly appeal to the mercy

of the Eternal. Incomparably tender and touching in its enumeration of the sorrows and burdens of life, it is not only a cry for deliverance and mercy, but the dim protest of human kind against its frailty and littleness, its troubles and afflictions, its helplessness before the divine ruler and the human oppressor. I have no patience with the clergy who omit this incomparable prayer in order to add ten minutes to their sermons.

The Religion of the Spirit

A little later in the same diary I come upon two other passages which I will print next:

When I hear people speculating on the future of religion, my mind goes back to the discourse with the woman of Samaria. "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem." We have had the religion of the Father and the religion of the Son, but not yet for mankind at large the religion of the Spirit. Jerusalem cries out that her temple is empty, and the mountain that it is deserted. Two-thirds of our population, we are told, never enter a place of worship, and

the remaining third are torn with dissensions about the government of Churches and the serving of tables. Yet the heart of man yearns still for the religion of the spirit and it shall not be disappointed.

* * * * *

Modern Pessimism

A large part of modern pessimism is a rooted objection to two and two making four. I have just been reading a story in which Providence is arraigned because a mother neglects her child and it falls into the fire, and another in which the nature of things is said to be incorrigible because a deserving man loses his money. These writers demand that fire should warm and cook, but never burn and scorch; that water should quench thirst and float ships, but not swamp or drown; that money should be precious, but its loss painless; that men should be rewarded for skill and prudence, but not suffer for stupidity and carelessness; that the nature of things should be variable according to our whims and necessities. The unvarying nature of things does indeed produce very perplexing results to a variable creature like man, but on the whole it

seems to me more orderly, and perhaps in the long run more comfortable, that two and two should make four than that they should make five or seven, according to the whim of an arbitrary Providence.

I will listen patiently to the tale of any curable wrong and thank the man who can touch my heart, or kindle my anger against it; but, as life goes on, I have less and less time for mere railing against the fixed framework of the universe. It is hard stuff, no doubt; but it's what we have to work upon, and there's no changing it.

* * * * *

In the year before his death Bagshot apparently devoted a good deal of his time to the study of Nietzsche, and a certain notebook abounds in scattered comments and queries on the "Will to Power" and the "Genealogy of Morals." It may seem strange that a man of his temperament should have conceived a warm admiration for the philosopher of anarchy; yet so it was, and I find him describing these books as "a splendid tonic for the orthodox" and their author as "performing supremely the indispensable

part of devil's advocate to this generation and its conventions." "Why all this pother about Nietzsche?" he writes on another occasion. "This mad mystic trying to make a philosophy out of the principles of the German General Staff is only our own Carlyle carried to the ultimate logic of his Teutonic ideas, and if you will go to him yourself and read his books, instead of taking them secondhand in the bowdlerised versions of his imitators, it will do you no more harm than a visit to the Zoological Gardens, where the Nietzschean principle is in full working order." Bagshot, however, failed in the full courage of his convictions, for his niece tells me that his volumes of Nietzsche were carefully locked away, and that he refused even to lend her "Zarathustra." Indeed a little later I find these comments:

Thoughts about Nietzsche

> The worst of Nietzsche is that none of the people who ought to read him will and that for those who do read him he is mostly virulent poison. Rightly construed this surging anarchism of his is a revolt against the doctrine which the supermen have imposed upon the world, and a call to

the lowly and meek to assert their manhood against their oppressors; and it is a singular perversion which makes it the gospel and justification of the oppressor. But that is the nemesis of all teaching which seeks to cast out fire with fire. To the oppressed Nietzsche says, "Go and be oppressors too"—which they will never be and never could be even if they wanted to be. It is utterly useless to invite the pigeon to become a hawk or to tell St. Francis to turn himself into Napoleon.

And again:

The Religion of Inhumanity

The best short answer to Nietzsche and his school is that all mankind has agreed to call the qualities that he decries "humanity" and the qualities that he extols "inhumanity." Mankind is infallible about human nature, and no German Professor has anything to teach it on that subject. There is someone wiser than M. Voltaire, said Talleyrand: *c'est tout le monde.* The philosophy which denies the humanity of man is from the beginning a contradiction in terms. Nietzsche's description of Christianity as

"slave morality" is a just comment on ecclesiastics, tyrants, and governments—and they are legion—who have used the Christian religion for their own ends. All Erastianism implies the conception of the "slave morality"; and every magistrate who regards religion as a means of keeping order deserves the Nietzschean rebuke. But it is the religion of the sword and not the religion of the meek and lowly which has enslaved mankind.

We pass from Nietzsche to sundry other reflections made apparently about the same time:

The World after next

The idea came to me in my dreams last night that I was in a vast church listening to a preacher who was discoursing about "the world after next." In the next world, he said, every faithful and humble member of every Church would be rewarded by finding that his religion was true, and every bigot and persecutor suffer the mortification of discovering that his own religion was false and the other religions true. But one and all would die to that world as to the

present world, and in the world after next enter upon a final stage of blessedness, in which that which is true in all religions would at length be revealed. The preacher's peroration was still sounding in my ears as I awoke: "Such, my brethren, is the ascent of man—ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem. To each his own symbol and shadow, till through life and death he may enter at the last into reality."

* * * * *

Reincarnation and its Results

Slackford visited me yesterday and declared himself a profound believer in the doctrine of reincarnation, which, he protested, alone furnished a clue to the problems of unmerited suffering and unremedied wrong. There are moments when I incline to that belief myself, but we debated hotly about its probable consequences, if it were true. He held out for the simple view that a prosperous existence in the present life argued a meritorious existence in previous lives, whereas I, on the contrary, denounced that conclusion as involving a gross confusion of moral and material values.

For I work it out thus. If, in physical warfare, it is the highest honour to be told off to fight the hottest corner, may it not, also, in the moral warfare, be the highest honour to be chosen to carry the flag through the fire of temptation, want and misery? In the scheme of reincarnation, where would the strong soul be sent by the King of the Universe? To the comfortable ease of respectable, wealthy existence or to the fire and storm of the under-world? And shall he not be scorched and wounded and perchance his white soul be stained and draggled, if he quit him like a man? Help for him by all means from willing hands, but be sure we do not pity the hero in the post of danger.

* * * * *

The Doctrine of the Last Hour

If we are to have a new theology, few things seem to me so desirable as to banish, not merely from our creeds but from our thought and practice, the theological doctrine of the "last hour." I see that the compilers of "Hymns Ancient and Modern" actually thought it necessary to add a verse echoing the words of the Burial Service to

the original four stanzas of the hymn "Days and moments quickly flying":

> O by Thy power grant, Lord, that we
> At our last hour fall not from Thee,

as if to burn into us the idea that frail humanity might in the agony of departure commit some unforgivable sin against the King of the Universe. Even the orthodox have grown sceptical about the death-bed conversion, but all the world is still under the tyranny of the death-bed relapse. I am told that I waste my effort on the drunkard or the criminal because he will relapse at the end. It is to count for nothing that I helped him to five years of sober and respectable life, if after it he returned to his cups or his crime. It is to count for nothing that those two old people loved each other and lived happily together for thirty years, because in their weak and lamentable old age they fell out and parted. Harshly cruel and unfair are these retrospective judgments from a man's worst to his best. *To the Eternal every good has its abiding value, and there is no bad that can blot it out.*

In the same strain is a passage I find in a letter which Bagshot wrote—apparently about this time—to a friend in the Prison Service:

Recidivism

I view with the greatest suspicion this doctrine of "recidivism," which the criminologists, as they call themselves, are endeavouring to foist on us. Everyone who relapses, is on this theory, to be regarded as hopeless. As well might the surgeon refuse to operate on a cancer because, though he may prolong life for five years, the patient will inevitably die of it in the end. Of course, the liability to relapse is a very important fact, and you do right to observe it and to regulate your treatment accordingly. But don't rush to the conclusion that, because a man may relapse, or even will relapse, it is useless to do anything for him. In one of the records you send me I read: "For three years he lived an *apparently* respectable life, but then he fell back into crime, and was re-convicted." Why "apparently"? Simply, so far as I can judge, because the chronicler assumes the fact of his re-conviction to have proved

his respectability to be spurious and worthless. I, on the contrary, think it a great feat which rewards all your efforts, that such a man should have run straight for three years. Do, I pray you, purge your department of the pernicious theological doctrine of the last hour. Man is not to be judged by the end that he makes, but by the whole of him, and any bit of him that is good counts in the reckoning. There is no mystical arithmetic which can make the last item cancel all the rest.

CHAPTER XI

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT HISTORY

IN this chapter I put together certain fragments about history gathered from many notebooks. Bagshot was a fervent but very desultory student of history, and he frequently avowed his ignorance of familiar facts and events:

Lapses of Memory

> There are some portions of history which I am totally unable to bear in my mind or to take the slightest interest in; though now and again I laboriously read them up from a kind of false pride which will not let me confess ignorance of what every schoolboy ought to know. I have been looking at an elementary history paper which my friend Jackson, who is a schoolmaster, tells me that almost every boy in his form could answer creditably. On five questions out of twelve my mind is almost

a blank. I could give no coherent account of the Wars of the Roses, I had forgotten, if I ever knew, that there was a Roman Emperor called Olybrius and another called Tacitus, I find it extremely difficult to say what anybody was fighting about at the battle of Fontenoy, and I can remember hardly anything about the battle of Linden except that before it "the sun was low." The worst of it is that, if I am quite frank with myself. I don't want to know. But I do always want to know how the mass of people lived and what they thought at any given period, and I would give whole centuries of history as it is written for a dozen photographs of Athens, Rome, Elizabethan London, Florence in the fifteenth century, Cordova in the ninth century, and of the types of people that inhabited them. It is impossible to exaggerate the difference in the conception of history that the possession of these records will make no future generations.

* * * * *

The Vanishing Perspective

One of the main difficulties of history is its vanishing perspective. All the remoter

incidents crowd together towards the horizon till we are at a loss to realize the spaces of time that divide them. Who can thoroughly grasp the fact that it was as long from the birth of Christ to the official recognition of Christianity by Constantine as from the reign of Charles I to the present day, or that four centuries divided Paul from Augustine? All that the historians give us are little oases in the desert of time, and we linger fondly in these, forgetting the vast tracks between one and another that were trodden by the weary generations of men.

The Advertising of the Greeks

Some races, like the Greek, have a genius for projecting themselves into history. They are the star performers of the world, and have compelled us to accept their little wars and internecine struggles as big with the fate of mankind. It is the triumph of a splendid kind of advertisement. They have a press which all the world must read—historians, poets, and philosophers combining to secure a unique publicity for their favourites among generations unborn.

Others, *sacro quia vate carent*, pass from the scene unsung. The Moors in Spain, who conferred priceless benefits on the modern world, and kept the torch of civilization alive in Europe in the blackest depths of the dark ages, have received no thanks from Western men. What schoolboy has ever heard of the Kalif Chakam, patron of letters, zealot for education, founder of schools, universities, libraries, and, Moslem though he was, anticipator by eight centuries of the ideas of toleration and intellectual freedom which Europe won eventually by blood and tears? It is the irony of fate that not one of the countless numbers of students and learned men who flocked to his Court and fed at his table repaid their debt by saving his name from oblivion.

* * * * *

Moral Progress

When anyone tells me that history affords no proof of the moral progress of mankind, I know that, though he may have read history books, he has not read literature to any purpose. It is nothing to the point to say that there were moral

heroes in ancient days; there were happily scores of them. It is the general opinion of mankind, *judged by the things it took for granted*, which is the test of contemporary morals, and for this we must read literature with a vigilant eye to the *plis de la pensée*. There is not a Roman or a Greek, a schoolman or a pietist of mediaeval times, a Catholic or a Protestant of the age of the Reformation, a jurist, historian, or poet of the Renaissance, who does not complacently accept moral assumptions which are repulsive to the modern mind. Jewish, Greek, and Roman thought denies all rights to the mass of kind; Socrates and Plato take unmentionable vice for granted; Cicero hurls insulting epithets at the *faex Romuli*, his friend Atticus applauds: "the Gods," cries Lucan,[1] "have never demeaned themselves to the life of the few—*humanum paucis vivit genus*," "mankind lives for the benefit of the few"; ecclesiastics burn witches, kill and torture heretics, each ascendant party in turn holding its right to be unimpeachable, and the world in

[1] "Pharsalia," V, 342-5.

general consenting. Outbreaks of savagery and even of persecution are possible in modern times, *but the world does not consent.* Here is the vast difference by which we may measure the progress of mankind. We have still a long way to travel before we can raise the practice of the world to the level of its professions, but the first step is to make its professions condemn its practice, and here the modern world is immeasurably in advance of the ancient or mediaeval.

So when ecclesiastics tell us that the sense of sin is dying out in the world, we may boldly affirm that the opposite is the case. There is no time recorded in history when the conscience of mankind was so sensitive to its shortcomings as in these days. The common and perfectly true saying that we must judge a past age according to its own moral assumptions is its own witness to this fact. Without this allowance much history would be a mere welter of savagery.

In October 1894 Bagshot was at Naples, and

spent many hours at Pompeii. One observation from his diary of travel may be quoted here:

Pompeii and the Middle Ages

> When I have spent a few hours at Pompeii or in the Naples Museum, I get the curious feeling that the whole of the Middle Ages are blotted out, and that I am in touch with a civilization which is nearer to our own than any in the intervening period till the middle of the eighteenth century. Here is all the familiar furniture of my own home, without any of those alien Gothic extravagances which take me into another world; here is such a house as I might live in and depart not an inch from the customs and conventions of my nineteenth-century existence. It requires an enormous effort of imagination to realize that between me and this lies the immense gulf of dark ages and middle ages, and the infinite toil and struggle of the centuries that made the modern world.

Another passage which I take from a letter to his nephew strikes a slightly different note about the Middle Ages:

No; you are wrong about the Middle Ages. They are not "a reaction from ancient civilization," but the period in which the rearguard of Western humanity was being brought up. Northern man starts on the race hundreds of years behind the point which Mediterranean man has reached, and hundreds of years must elapse before he can come level. After centuries, his culture and his processes of thought are, as you say, "such as would have seemed childish to a Greek of the fifth century or a Roman of the age of Cicero." Yet all the time he has been advancing, and all the time assimilating and even refining what he has received from antiquity. Provided, *ab extra*, with a religion which the Greek would have turned into a philosophy and the Roman into a system of law, he keeps it simple and strong and imaginative, and brings it constantly into a closer relation with working humanity. You get the concrete image of it all in the transition from the Roman Basilica to the Gothic Cathedral, from solid formalism to genius with the heart of a child; genius vividly in touch

with the common life, yet soaring to the highest point reached by the human imagination. A vast deal of nonsense has been talked about "Art" and the Middle Ages, but it is not "Art" at all in the sense that a fatigued modern uses the word; it is nature and the soul of man bursting into leaf and flower, as the woods in spring. When you are tempted to decry the Middle-Ages, think of the cathedral-builders.

I pass to a sanguine if debatable proposition:

Long and short-range forces

The most superficial reading of history convinces one that all the long-range forces are moral and all the short-range forces physical. No victory of material force ever is final unless it corresponds to an idea. Unity is an idea, race a community of ideas; the unity may be dissolved from within but it will not be broken by attacks from without. The Roman Empire was not destroyed by barbarians; it was dissipated and dissolved because it had ceased to be Roman.

Statesmanship would be easy and peace secure, if mankind were only governed by

self-interest. It is the incalculable idealism of man—his passion and pride and lust for self-assertion and expansion—that destroys his peace and lends the glamour and glory to his existence. History teaches us to mistrust all policies which assume that nations will act as on a cold calculation of their material advantages they ought to act. There is always something not ourselves which defeats the utilitarian within us.

An observation about Germany may come in here:

Beware the Mystic

I see in the movement for German Unity a gradual condensation of all the mystic vapours of the German temperament into something hard and solid. Beware the mystic when he materializes! That transmutation of thinking energy to practical ends is the most formidable thing in the world.

A mathematician might object to the simile in the following passage, but it need not be taken too literally:

If history never repeats itself, there are

Recurring decimals

nevertheless certain recurring decimals which come again and again, though mankind fails to recognize them. It seems incredible that the mistakes at the beginning of the Boer war could have been committed by men who had the experience of the Crimean war before them, or who had even read the earlier chapters of Kinglake's history. One would like to see certain experiences tabulated and set on record for the warning of subsequent generations. And yet the effort would, I suppose, be vain; and after all it is one of the splendid things about life that each generation starts anew with the incurable freshness of youth, unillusioned if inexperienced, and ardent as ever for the impossible adventures which make men heroes and fools. Nature has seen to it that man should never be too wise.

CHAPTER XII

MORE ABOUT HISTORY

IN the spring of 1898 Bagshot was laid up for a month, and appears to have spent a good deal of his enforced leisure upon his diary and correspondence. I come upon a "comment on nineteenth-century" history, from which I judge that he has been reading Lord Palmerston's Life and Letters:

The Palmerstonian Diplomacy

One of the oddest sensations afforded by the history of our own times comes to me when I find Lord Palmerston calmly confessing in a letter to Lord John Russell that, if we had gone to war with Prussia over the Schleswig-Holstein affair, the total force we could have put into the field would have been 20,000 men, 20,000 armed with muzzle-loading rifles against 200,000 or 300,000 Prussians and Austrians armed with breech-loaders. And this avowal is

made calmly, candidly, and without shame within a month of the time when these two old men were fighting valiantly for that desperate enterprise against—happily—the united opposition of their junior colleagues. Was it sublime audacity, criminal folly, or sheer ignorance on the part of these ancients, who clearly had not the faintest conception of what modern warfare, as organized by Bismarck, was going to be?

But it is, nevertheless, *the* most striking fact in nineteenth-century history that Great Britain dominated the politics of Europe, struck blow upon blow for nationality and liberty, proclaimed its *civis Romanus* doctrine, and reaped the honours and rewards of Palmerstonian diplomacy with a military force which could never have seriously challenged any considerable Power. One sees in it partly a splendid game of bluff backed by the prestige gained in the Napoleonic wars, partly an instinctive apprehension of sea-power and its meaning among our neighbours and rivals, and partly an ingenious manipulation of forces by a clever diplomacy which gave a minor-

ity vote the decisive power. It would be agreeable to add that there was an interlude between the fall of Napoleon and the rise of Bismarck when moral arguments prevailed, unsupported by physical force. Englishmen had persuaded themselves that this was the case, until the peace was shattered by the Crimean war, and their persuasion unquestionably lent force and fervour to their remonstrances. But the power of Britain during these years owed, I think, more to the fact that she alone among the nations succeeded in solving her internal problems while her great neighbours were constantly plunged into revolution or plagued with the fear of revolution. I believe the time is coming when the nation which best succeeds in solving its internal problems will again have a power in the world which is altogether out of proportion to its naval and military strength.

In a letter to Charles Harman (afterwards the husband of his niece, Molly) I find a passage on tolerance which Mr. Harman tells

me was provoked by a chance observation in a letter of his own:

Modern Tolerance

It is true that we don't torture heretics or burn witches, but I am more than doubtful when I hear people talking of tolerance as a modern virtue. I see little evidence that the modern man is in his heart more tolerant than his ancestors. Which of our friends is there who does not really in his heart think the worse of us if we differ from him on some subject in which he is genuinely interested? When I look round on the propagandist sects and the propagandist Press, and see the money and the energy which are devoted to the spread of every sort of opinion, the stream of books, pamphlets, and newspapers dedicated to different causes and crotchets, the heat and zeal, the sound and fury which are expended on these efforts, it seems to me that never at any time have so many people been so furiously engaged in trying to make other people think what they think, or expressed their resentment with such passion when they failed in this enterprise. It is still

apparently as firmly rooted in human nature as ever that a man shall not only think his own thoughts but strive to make other people think them too, and strive the more vehemently and passionately in proportion as he is conscious of a doubt lurking at the heart of a subject.

Akin to this is an observation about martyrdom:

Martyrdom to Lost Causes

One of the most tragic things in history is the unending martyrdom to lost causes. There is no idea so ridiculous and outlandish but that someone has gone to the stake for it. Thousands have died for the Crescent as for the Cross, for the Synagogue as for the Church, for heresy as for orthodoxy, for indistinguishable shades of opinion about beliefs which were wholly false, for tyranny as for liberty, for anarchy as for order—faithful unto death for the truth that was no truth, doing loyal service to detestable masters, wasting heroism in the service of poltroons. Yet by such have the great human virtues of constancy and loyalty been established; and, if not martyrs

for the truth, they are witnesses to the best in man—his fantastic chivalry and contempt for death, when once an idea has laid hold of his imagination.

The following is taken from another letter to Charles Harman written during the same month.

The Children of Light and the Children of this World

When one of the children of light proves wiser in his generation than the children of this world, the powers of darkness may begin to tremble. Many of the great makers and emancipators have been supreme over the worldlings in worldly wiles—Cromwell for instance, Cavour, and even Lincoln. As a rule the impatient idealists only win their victory when they get a man of this type to lead them, and a large part of his work consists in preventing them from ruining their cause by forcing his hands.

Don't please, think this a cynical saying or imagine for one moment that I am blaming the idealists. Lincoln would have been impossible without Lloyd Garrison, Cavour without Mazzini and Garibaldi, Peel without Cobden. It is the business

of Lloyd Garrison and Mazzini to be impatient, it is the business of Lincoln and Cavour to bide their time. Nor need one pity the statesman because he suffers a certain amount of misunderstanding and vexation in the performance of his prescribed part. That, again, is his *métier*. Two-thirds of all statesmanship consists in managing your friends; whoever can do that will generally have his opponents at his mercy.

To another friend who writes to him about politics at this time he replies:

The "Ruin of the Empire"

You say that if we enter into this agreement about Madagascar it will be "the ruin of the Empire." I should be rather disposed to agree with you, if you were content to say that it would be unprofitable to a small portion of our trade. I have made notes of seven articles in recent reviews and magazines, in each of which the writer assures me that the Empire will be irretrievably ruined unless something is done which he wants done or something not done that he disapproves of. Bank-

ruptcy stares us in the face if we do not do something—I can't make out what—about the gold standard; Armageddon threatens if we do something else about the Suez Canal; our power will depart for ever unless we immediately adopt the re-duplicating automatic inflexible tubular boiler; our sun will set and the Empire fall to pieces if the Liberal Party or the Tory Party wins the coming by-election. You really must try another bait, if you want to catch an old trout like me. The Empire has been ruined a hundred times every year since I came on the scene, and when I was a young man I used to be quite miserable about it, but since I became forty I have resigned myself to live philosophically among the ruins.

Two more passages from the diary of this month may be left to speak for themselves:

Political Prophecy and its Limits

I have spent much of my leisure during the last few weeks in hunting down the political predictions made by the wise men of the nineteenth century, and the result is a sad commentary on human blindness and

nescience. I cannot discover any single war which was definitely foreseen except by those who deliberately planned it, any revolutionary movement which did not take by surprise the guardians of law and order, any development of wealth and distribution of population which followed the lines laid down for it, any results of political change which did not belie either hopes or fears. I find De Tocqueville predicting that America would be a land of moderate fortunes evenly distributed, Mr. Gladstone confident that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, Lord Salisbury declaring a united Germany to be a remote improbability, Lord Granville confident that peace was never so assured as on the day before the Franco-German war broke out, and all well-informed Englishmen persuaded that the one dangerous and formidable man in Europe was the Emperor Napoleon III, while, in fact, he was a hopeless invalid, clinging wearily to his throne and lying helplessly at the mercy of his German enemy. I find Governments and peoples constantly obsessed by groundless night-

mares and wholly unconscious of the real perils that lay ahead of them. There are times when a nation seems to have a positive genius for the wrong bogey. And yet the longer I live, the deeper grows my conviction that though knowledge is unattainable, and desperate error is the inevitable lot of human Governments, faith is the supreme and saving virtue for nations and individuals. The one irreparable disaster is that a nation should lose faith in itself.

Another note about political prophecy may be added here:

Prophecy was a desperate enough business in the pre-scientific period, when there appeared to be some guarantee that the material environment of man would be approximately a constant factor, but it is sheer folly in these times, when no one knows what new invention or unexpected discovery may come to light to change all the conditions of life and material prosperity. Who, for instance, can say at this moment that all the material advantages

mayn't pass from the coal-producing countries to the water-power countries, from Great Britain and Germany, to Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, and the North of Italy? Who can venture to predict what changes in the habits of men and their relations with each other may not be produced by dirigible balloons or flying-machines so practicable that everyone can use them, or even by advances in ocean travel, which may obliterate time and distance and add further to the shrinkage of the world? At the beginning of the last century man still seemed to be the one variable factor in a fixed framework of comparatively constant things, whereas now nature is as variable as man, and all the unknown factors are indefinitely multiplied. The likelihood and the rapidity of change increase with every year that we live. Hence it is that there is no simple rule of three sum by which we can measure the possibilities of progress. It does not follow that because England took five centuries to gain political liberty and evolve her constitutional system, Russia need take

one-tenth of the time to reach the same point. The backward nations can take over a large part of what the forward nations have won by the toil of years, and leap whole centuries at a bound, as Japan has done. *Natura nil facit per saltum,* I hear you say, and it is true enough, if you leave the old dame to her own devices. But with a little prodding from man, nature has enormously quickened her pace in the last hundred years, and in my mind's eye I see her sprinting outrageously in the years to come.

* * * * *

I may wind up this chapter with a note about primitive Christianity:

The "Miracle of Christianity"

I never feel so near to the divine element in Christianity as when I read the simple facts of the primitive Christian mission in the pages of some purely secular historian. The conquest of the Roman world by the apostles and missionaries of the obscure Jewish sect is the most stupendous event in the world, and it is a thousand pities that the average man's knowledge of it

should end with the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The ecclesiastical historians have never risen to the height of it. They fail to see that in proportion as they multiply miracles, Christianity itself ceases to be miraculous. It would be no miracle to have converted mankind by signs and wonders, but the conquest of faith remains the supreme miracle.

CHAPTER XIII

MORE LETTERS

I HAVE reserved to the end of the new material presented in these chapters a last packet of Bagshot's letters to his niece Molly and her husband, Charles Harman. These are about everything and nothing, and as before, I can only take a few passages at haphazard from the less personal among them. During the years covered by this correspondence, Charles Harman was increasing his income by writing for various newspapers, and he was in the habit of consulting his uncle-in-law, who sent him suggestions from time to time. Thus Harman has posed the subject of "irony" for what is called a "middle-article," and this sets Bagshot flowing:

About Irony

Irony is a noble and cleansing weapon if applied by a serene spirit to the discords of

life; it is a savage and unholy vengeance if it is merely the mockery of a spirit at war with itself.

In the literature of discontent there is a world of difference between the malice and uncharitableness of the envious soul and the fierce indignation of the just man at the wrongs of his fellows. The two are often confounded, and to detect their difference is a very nice effort in moral discrimination.

When I read Swift, I can never quite escape the thought that his anger at oppression is partly a furious disappointment that he was not born among the oppressors. When I read Milton I know that he is righteously indignant. But *really* righteous indignation—*i.e.*, disinterested indignation—is, I am afraid, rarer than you think.

The next subject tossed up is "flattery and the artistic conscience."

Flattery and the Artistic Conscience

You say that artists and writers are notoriously conceited people. But not the great ones. For the life of me, I cannot think of Shakespeare or Milton or Bunyan or the prophet Isaiah as conceited men

though I can just think it of Micah or Habakkuk, who, as Voltaire said, was "*capable de tout.*" The real artistic conscience refuses to be deceived. You cannot flatter the great artist by telling him he has painted a good picture when he knows he has painted a bad one; or the great writer by telling him he has written a good book when he knows he has written a bad one. If you try, his conscience will tell him that you are either incompetent or insincere.

One odd thing I have noticed about the writers I have known. They are usually in despair about what they have just written, but often quite complacent about what they wrote a year ago. I suppose in the former case they remember and in the latter case they have forgotten what they *meant* to write.

The normal attitude of a man is to admire and envy and greatly to exaggerate the value of the gifts which he does not possess himself. A work of genius implies a perfect assimilation of the man to the thing he does; an assimilation which makes

the effort seem natural and normal to him; and that banishes conceit, which is the consciousness of doing something exceptional and highly accomplished. Hence the common observation that writers are conceited about their speech-making, but not about their writing; painters about their writing, but not about their painting; poets about their fiddling, or piano-strumming, but not about their poetry. When a man *is* conceited about the thing he does habitually, it is a sure proof that he has not passed the stage at which he conceives it to be an exceptional accomplishment, and this means again that he is not at the beginning of genius.

The Master and the Masterpiece

What the master feels about the masterpiece is but a dim conjecture for the rest of us, but conceit must be the last word for it. It is pride, joy, elation, exultation, and if you like, a serene superiority to carpers and critics who cannot rise to it. That may express itself in ways which stupid people will take for conceit, and if he proves not to be a master, and the masterpiece is not

finally acclaimed, then, in due time, you may write him down an ass. But before you pass judgment, you must wait till the game is played out. Forty years ago half Germany and all the rest of Europe said that Wagner was a conceited donkey.

I take these at random from many letters:

Random Comments

The worst thing about life is that the worst part comes last. In another life the reward of the just man must, surely, be to work backwards from old age to youth.

* * * * *

It is a tradition among Judges never to settle any case on its merits, if they have an excuse for riding off on a side issue. That is the habit of all mankind in regard to truth.

* * * * *

Our friend F. recalls to me Dean Swift's story of the Archbishop of Dublin who was willing to become a "patriot" (*i.e.*, to join Swift against the Government,) because, as he said, "there was no precedent for promoting an Archbishop of Dublin to the See

of Armagh." Don't scoff, however, for there is a certain kind of character which must have succeeded and put success behind it, before it can begin to develop on the moral side. If success often spoils, there are some few whom it really makes in this sense.

* * * * *

Be very careful of ever saying or thinking that Hamlet will be without the Prince of Denmark if *you* go out. How many times in my life have I seen the melancholy Dane retire in dudgeon just before the curtain was going to rise, and Hamlet proceed without a hitch, or even a word from the prompter. There is no man necessary to anything, not even the Prince of Denmark to Hamlet.

* * * * *

Vulgarity in Foreigners

Why is it that we have such peculiar difficulty in perceiving vulgarity in foreigners? M. (an American friend) is greatly annoyed with me because I asked him to dinner to meet the H.'s (other Americans), who he tells me are notorious vulgarians in their own country. "Don't I hear," he asks

indignantly, "how they speak the English language?" Upon my soul I don't; they seem to me to speak it exactly as he speaks it, and to be extremely agreeable, high-spirited people. It doesn't matter a red cent to me whether they are in his set or not, and I intend to pursue their acquaintance. But, then, I don't know an Italian cook from an Italian Count, or, when they are both in mufti, a German baron from a German waiter. Query, is this my density, or is it that our ideas of culture and refinement are strictly provincial, and that, in dealing with foreigners, we strip them off and deal as man to man? As a democrat, I favour the latter explanation, which also has the merit of flattering my vanity.

* * * * *

The greatest geniuses have added little to the stock of thought, but they have added enormously to the stock of energy. Most of them are content to take the common stock of thought and give it a new emotional value. Almost any second-rate philosopher will give you more original thought than Shakespeare or Milton, but the value

of original thinking to human-kind at large is vastly exaggerated.

* * * * *

A Solemn Thought

A solemn and painful thought has just come over me, and please bear it in mind in educating your child: Suppose by some miracle I found myself transported back into antiquity, a solitary modern man in the ancient world. What could I teach them of the present age and its civilization? Could I show them how to make a steam-engine of the simplest kind, or a modern loom, or how to instal the rudest electrical plant, much less to construct a locomotive, a motor-car, a telephone, or a sewing-machine? I could *assert* that the earth was round, and that it revolved round the sun, but could I *prove* either proposition? I could generalize about evolution, and talk in a vague and romantic way about certain physical and biological speculations, but could I give them any coherent account of a modern chemical or physical laboratory? Honesty compels me to say "No" to all these questions. Positively the only thing I think I could teach them would be how

to print from type, and heaven knows why they did not discover that for themselves. At my time of life it is quite hopeless for me to try to get any accurate knowledge about these mechanical things, but none the less my sloppy ignorance about them is a constant discomfort to me, and I do think a child ought to have the elements ground into him.

* * * * *

Sensations *à deux*

I am surprised on examining myself to find how many of my sensations are sensations *à deux* or *à plusieurs*. I can go to a concert alone, but I cannot go to a theatre alone; I can read poetry alone, but I cannot read humour alone; I can walk alone in the town, but not in the country. Half the pleasure of a beautiful scene is gone for me if I cannot express it and get it back from another mind. If I were an artist I could paint alone, for all the time I should be expressing myself to an imaginary other person; but in nearly all other pleasures of an aesthetic kind I am merely a subject requiring an object (or victim) to discharge myself upon.

Here, to wind up this chapter, are three passages from letters to his niece written during the last year of his life:

Your Kantian Rhapsodies over the starry heavens seen from the Terrace at Caux delight me. Superb, indeed, is that great sweep of sky with the lake, on a still night, giving it back, and the jagged edges of the Savoy mountains coming sharp against the spangled blue. Yet there are moods when the mystery of it all is more than one can bear. I have stood there and turned aside in a kind of rage at those exasperating little points of light which pique an insatiable curiosity. Surely there is a subtle mockery in that five-hundred-year-old twinkling in the heart of space, so confidential and so horribly remote!

* * * * *

The Romance of Telegraph Posts

You are quite wrong when you take telegraph posts for a symbol of modern ugliness. I know few things more beautiful to the eye than a long line of them striding over a moor to the horizon, and delicately marking the distance in their race to overtake each other. I see them as symbols of

companionship linking centre and outpost, and in the singing of their wires I hear all the voices of human-kind, bearing good tidings and bad, the lover's secrets, the sportsman's tips, the merchant's prices, the death-roll from the veld, the latest scores from the Oval. Highly romantic and rubbishy, you will say, and by all means, if you think so. I'm only telling you how they affect *me*. I see that Charles has been joining in the outcry against the new railway down the Tessebourne Valley. Why, a passing train with a nice trail of blue-white smoke from the engine is just what that landscape wants to make it perfect! Tell him to shut up.

* * * * *

A French Proverb

You say that you'll act, if Mrs. S. and Mrs. B. will begin. If so, none of you will do anything. Have you never heard the story of the bewitched forest—how an evil spirit told all the trees that the first of them to blossom in the spring would be withered and destroyed, and how each of them waited for someone else to begin, and so the whole forest remained dark and dead for a thousand years?

CHAPTER XIV

MISCELLANEA

ANOTHER batch of correspondence with friends who do not otherwise come into this record yields a few more extracts which are worth setting down before I finish. In September 1898 Bagshot is writing to an old friend about a young man in whom they were both interested, and this friend appears to have said that the young man was passing through what ought to be—but apparently was not in his case—"the best time of life." Bagshot takes him up:

The Best Time of Life

> The best time of life? With any luck, from forty to fifty, and God grant me, if I am alive after 1904, to begin saying then from fifty to sixty. Oh, yes; there is a great deal to be said for youth, strong limbs, high spirits, *joie de vivre*, and that illimitable look-forward embracing all im-

possibilities which closes in so suddenly when you find your berth. Still, I would not choose to live over again the years from twenty to thirty. What loads of anxiety one suffered from examinations, with all the elders conspiring together to persuade one that the whole of one's future hung upon success or failure! What an impenetrable thicket the business of life looked from the outside, and into what depths of despair one fell, as one wandered round it looking in vain for a gap! Vividly I remember walking about a certain suburb in that hour when the gas is lit before the blinds are drawn, and looking greedily into the rooms as a child might into a toyshop and envying the settled security of fixed incomes which they seemed to imply, so different from my lodging off the Strand and precarious—very precarious—three pounds a week. Looking back on it from my haven at Whitehall, I can colour it with a sort of romance, but in my heart I know it was not romantic, and honestly I don't want it again. Every lad who is worth his salt should go through it and will get through

it, but you don't help them by pretending it isn't hard.

I pass from this to a letter of the same year written to a friend who has sent him a book on mysticism. It is long, and I have space only for one extract:

Mysticism and Rationalism

All through literature, all through philosophy, all through religion, we may trace the struggle of the human mind to establish the mystic principle against the material, faith against knowledge, love against justice, freedom against necessity, will against intellect. The gentle mystics say love and faith, the violent mystics say will and power, but both are at one in their rebellion against the pretension of the intellect to reduce life to reason. The difficulty of the struggle for the mystics is that they have to argue with the rationalist on *his* terms. For all argument implies that reason does prevail, and the assertion of a principle transcending reason is from the beginning a denial that the issue can be settled by argument. The mystic can do nothing but impeach the logical instrument of his opponent, and this

he often does with great skill, but in so far as he succeeds, the conclusion is not that he is right but that neither he nor the other fellow can establish anything by any valid process of reasoning.

A year later he is arguing with an artistic friend about the artistic sense:

The Artistic Sense

There is no such thing as *the* artistic sense. The sense of beauty is not one but diverse. There are painters who are wholly without taste in architecture or music, musicians who are blind to painting, poets who are complete Philistines in all arts but their own, prose-writers of rare accomplishment who are gross bunglers as either makers or critics of poetry. The age of Pericles and the Italian Renaissance each produced a group of men who were equally gifted in all the arts, but as a rule it is positive salvation for the poet *not* to be a painter, for the painter *not* to be a musician, for the musician *not* to be an aesthete in other branches of art. An all-round hyperaesthesia is almost always a morbid con-

dition which sends its victim to drink or drugs and destroys the character which a thorough mastery of any one art requires.

To a friend who has sent him a book on Christian evidences he writes about the same time:

The Evidences of Religion

All your proofs are to my mind as nothing to the witness which religion bears to itself. That he should need religion, and that he should have found religion, is the supreme fact which really does distinguish man from the brutes that perish, and which for me establishes the real existence of that something outside himself which is the stuff of all religions, that something with which he must compare himself and to which he aspires in life and in death. There are whole chapters in your book which any secularist lecturer that knew his business could tear to pieces in a few minutes, but, if it were all established beyond challenge, it would not give me one thousandth part of the confidence that I draw from this vision of humanity needing the gods and stretching its hands to the farther shore. . . .

Humanity is like the glow-worm in that its light comes from within.

I pass to some shorter passages taken at random from many letters. Here are some cricket similes:

Some Cricketing Similes

Tell F., with my compliments, I can easily play his bowling. If he really wants to deceive me, he should make the ball break three inches, not three feet. I never knew a man whose stratagems were so obvious.

George is that dangerous kind of man who never misses an easy catch. Nothing is so serviceable in the long run, and to that I attribute most of his success in life.

G. R.-K. is one of the splendid deep-fields of the Empire, infinitely more patient than any of us, and as alert as if he were standing at point in Whitehall. What a long line he guards, how keenly he watches for the ball to come his way, and how splendidly he "saves the boundary"! We stay-at-homes can only clap from the pavilion, and nine times out of ten there is no "gate" for *his* game.

He sent you a loose ball and you hit it for six. Good; but don't presume on it. I know him of old. He will send you down two half-volleys and two long-hops, and then wind up with a ripping ball, which will take your bails, if you aren't very careful. He may be a stupid man, but he has uncommonly clever streaks in him.

The next is about a literary critic lately dead:

Various Characters

Dear G. dealt faithfully with his generation, as you say, but he had at least the humanity to think well of a friend's book. Not log-rolling, mind you, but sheer, amiable fault-blindness where his affections were engaged. That I count to him for virtue. If ever you hear a judge boast that he can try a friend impartially, be very sure that he is a bad judge.

About a paradoxical friend:

In flying from platitude to paradox H. seems to be perpetually in the act of escaping from a half-truth into a quarter-truth.

To a poor friend threatened with loss of income by a dispute with a rich employer:

Advice to the poor—behave in all the emergencies of life *as if you were rich.* This is the great bluff which equalizes the conditions. Do it, my dear chap, and we'll see you through.

To an architect:

Mill in his Autobiography tells us the fear used to haunt him that all the musical combinations would be exhausted. He needn't have worried himself about that, but it *is* true that all the chief architectural combinations have been exhausted, and you fellows are thrown back upon combinations and proportions—which is more than enough for most of you. Never again can there be any thrill like the discovery of the pointed arch.

To this chapter of odds and ends may be added certain fragments which I find in a notebook labelled "Reminiscences." Since Bagshot never to my knowledge tried his hand at fiction, I imagine that they are real transcripts from life:

Margaret and Ruby

January 4, 1899. To-day I heard the story of Margaret and Ruby, told by their

mother and aunt, who sat behind me on top of the yellow omnibus from the Marble Arch to Holborn. "Ruby was a naughty girl, there was no denyin' it, and Margaret —one must be just—there was no saying nothing against her. She was always punctual-like and tidy, and she did wash the children and cook them their meals and send them to school and look after the baby. There wasn't never a stick out of place when Margaret was about, and it was as much as your life was worth if you dropped a pin on the floor. And there was no denyin' that Ruby was out all day and sometimes didn't come back till ten o'clock at night, and then wanted something 'ot for supper. But Ruby had a way with her, and Margaret, well (once more) nobody would ever hear her saying nothing 'gainst Margaret—justice was justice—but (long pause) she did wish someone would marry Margaret. She had tried hard with Ruby's young men, and Ruby wasn't a bit jealous; but none of them would take Margaret; they was all after Ruby."

So there was nothing to be done about Margaret, but the case of Ruby had suddenly become urgent. "Ruby 'ad up and said she wasn't going to live at 'ome no more, unless 'er grandmother was sent away, and 'er father 'e 'ad up and said that so long as 'e lived 'er grandmother wouldn't live nowhere else. But Ruby, she was that wilful she'd think no more of walkin' out of the 'ouse and never comin' back than she would of spending a day at 'Ampstead." Ruby had been argued with. "I says to 'er, you're a wicked, ungrateful girl that you are, Ruby. If you 'adn't got no grandmother, whoever'd get up in the morning to give you a 'ot breakfast and a rasher of bacon to it? Whoever'd do your shoes at nights, and what would you do all lonesome in some hattick with no grandmother to do nothing for you? But Ruby, she says she don't care nothing about that, and that if she's going on paying me ten shillings a week for 'er keep, she's goin' to 'ave a room to 'erself, and there ain't no room if the old lady stays. I'm not sayin' there isn't reason in 'er 'avin' a room, and ten

shillings is ten shillings, and it do make a lot of difference, comin' reg'lar, with four children to feed, let alone Ruby and George and the old lady, all big eaters. If only one o' Ruby's young men would marry Margaret and let Ruby 'ave 'er room. Not that I'm sayin' that Ruby's a good girl. Fair's fair. She do carry on, and there's no denyin' it. Two nights last week she wasn't in till half-past ten, and the hoffice shuts at six, so we knows she wasn't there, and it 'xasperates 'er father, and it's 'ard on the old lady 'aving to sit up to 'alf-past ten and do 'er boots after that and be up at six in the morning to light the fire and give 'er 'er 'ot breakfast afore she goes out. And (once more) there's no denyin' that Margaret's a good girl, but whatever will I do without Ruby, and George that cross if the old lady don't get everything she wants the moment she asks for it."

Then the aunt chimes in: "I never was one to say nothing 'gainst Margaret, and I never known 'er do nothing wrong since she was that 'igh, but there ain't nobody

like Ruby. Don't 'ee part with Ruby I say, don't 'ee part with Ruby."[1]

* * * * *

Making a Good End

March 10, 1900. Old Tom Burnley, for twenty years the caretaker of my office, died this morning. I went to see him last week, and found him comparatively well and much interested in an experiment he was making. He had asked two doctors to attend him, each of whom was coming on alternate days without the knowledge of the other. The Monday, Wednesday, and Friday doctor charged two shillings a visit; the Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday doctor eighteenpence. He gave them both a rest on Sundays, and his comment on the affair was that the two-shilling doctor was on the whole the cheaper, for "he gave more medicine, and it hadn't to be taken so often." I thought it prudent to

[1] Bagshot added a note to this story a year later: "I have spent hours puzzling over this problem, and Ruby has become quite familiar to me. What happened, and how was it settled? Anyhow, my sympathies are wholly with Ruby; but the 'old lady' does seem to have earned her keep in this establishment."

send my own man to have a look at him—which made a third—but the old fellow was past mending, and seems enormously to have enjoyed the process of dying.

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The Report of the Water-finder

March 18, 1900. A water-finder came to-day and went all over my little estate with a divining-rod in search of a place to sink a well. I am now in a great pother what to do, for, though he claims to be absolutely infallible, he tells me he is unable to say whether the effect on his rod is caused by a little water near the surface or a great deal of water a long way down, since the two causes produce identical results. There may therefore be either an immense river 100 miles below the spot he has indicated or a serviceable spring within fifty feet. Now, if I sink a shaft fifty feet, or a hundred feet, or two hundred feet, and find no water, he will still be right, but I shall be a hundred pounds out of pocket. Anyhow, that man is a genius.

* * * * *

The Philosophy of the Steeplejack

June 20, 1900. Having to wait an hour at Bletchley Junction to-day, I had the

good luck to fall in with a steeplejack, who began to talk to me about his profession; and, getting into the same carriage with me, went on talking all the way up to London. On the whole, I am inclined to think he was the wisest man I ever met, and I never knew anyone practise a dangerous calling who was so entirely without brag or swagger about it. Out of his own head he had mastered the grand principle that all dangers are on an equality when they pass a certain point. When I asked him whether it wasn't horrible to have to run that risk every day, "Lor, sir," he replied, "it ain't no riskier than sitting on a roof and nailing on slates, nor half so risky as walking along a parapet in a gale of wind—what every mason has to do, and think nothing of it. I reckon if you falls forty feet you're killed, and it don't make no odds how much higher ye go, excep' maybe ye comes down quicker and gets it over easier." I call that heroic commonsense. My man admitted, however, that it was "an uncomfortable job" getting over the cornice of a factory chimney when she

was swinging in the wind; but, "there, every trade has its drawbacks!"

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A Natural History Incident

June 20, 1900. I was in the Natural History Museum to-day and sat reflecting before the model of the vast prehistoric monster known as Diplodocus, when there came in two little boys, aged about eleven and thirteen, with an intensely business-like air. One of them produced a yard-measure and proceeded to measure off a portion of the beast on the floor beside it. This puzzled me greatly, until they came to the end, and I discovered that they had laid down twenty-two yards, marking the terminals neatly with a piece of white chalk. Then, of course, I had it, and my conjecture was beautifully verified. Leaving the younger one standing at my end, the older went back and bowled an imaginary ball down the measured pitch. Then they chuckled with delight, and made off as hard as they could. I followed them to the hall, and was in time to see them clattering down it and out into the street. For once the whole thing is as clear as daylight to

me. Some solemn parent or teacher had been rash enough to charge them with romancing when they said that Diplodocus would span a cricket pitch and leave his head and tail projecting at either end; and now they were going back with proof positive for the discomfiture of that unhappy man. Moral: Never correct children.

CHAPTER XV

LAST WORDS

Criticisms of Bagshot

HOW Bagshot would have shuddered if he could have foreseen the exposure of his private moralizings to curious folk who never knew him—he who kept his notebooks locked away even from his most intimate friends! Truth to tell, my conscience pricks me a little as I look at a pile of letters which lies before me—letters which have reached me during the serial publication of these chapters—upbraiding him for innumerable offences against good manners and sound beliefs. But he was, according to his light, a just man; and something tells me that, since I have published his "Comments," he would like me also to publish a selection of other people's comments on him. Let me, therefore, plunge into it and get it over as quickly as possible.

I take first a letter signed "Impatient Idealist":

His "Cold-blooded-ness" and "Foolish Optimism"

I loathe your Bagshot, with his pose of reason and sanity, his moderation, and his insufferable patronage of the prophets and apostles. Give me, if you will, a good, fanatical, romantic reactionary who can lose his head for a lost cause, but not this academic pettifogger with his foolish optimism, his pretence of seeing good in everything, his fatuous Liberalism, his affected charity. That cold-blooded passage in which he calmly sets out what he is pleased to call the "métiers" of the so-called statesmen and the "impatient idealists" is really the last straw. As if life was a kind of puzzle-picture into which pieces of different kinds and shapes were to be fitted by one Bagshot devoting to it such leisure as could be spared from the impeccable performance of prescribed tasks in a Government office. The last straw, did I call it? The passage which corrects an emancipated woman for wishing to make the best of both worlds is in some ways even worse. Of course she wishes the best of both worlds—as if any woman with spirit enough to release herself from an intolerable yoke wouldn't use teeth

and claws upon the colourless Philistines and Pharisees who tried to cold-shoulder her! But that's so like your Bagshot. We are all to have our little spaces in his puzzle-picture—there he fixes us and there we are to stay, living a model life according to the rules and regulations of the Civil Service, to be corrected like children if being a round peg we venture into a square hole. Thank you, not for me!

Bagshot's politics are, of course, absurdly old-fashioned, but allowance may be made for that, since he died in 1906 and was brought up on mid-Victorian superstitions. But no allowance can be made for the pre-Ibsenite conventionality of his view of life. The real emancipation movement of these times, the emancipation from the stifling atmosphere and foolish sentiment of the British home, the emancipation from the slave morality imposed by parents and priests, passes him by and leaves him unconcerned. Through all the arid waste of his "Comments" one looks in vain for any thought which recognizes the real, deep, revolutionary movement of these

times. He skims with airy optimism over the surface, invariably missing the vital, seething, inner things of life. No "impatient idealism" for him!

Personally, I have a suspicion that Bagshot kept as steady an eye on the movement of these times as the writer of this letter, but I shall get into trouble if I try to defend him. It is quite true that he suspected sophistry in all clever criticisms of life which arraign the grand conclusions of common-sense, and I have often heard him protest when a superior kind of reality was claimed for what is conventionally called realism. The reader, however, must judge for himself whether Bagshot's undeniable optimism had roots in the inner things of life or was merely, as the "Impatient Idealist" suggests, an airy skimming over the surface of things. Another correspondent, who signs himself "Honesty," makes a different criticism:

His False Moderation and Persuasiveness

It is long since I have come across anything so insidiously subversive as the "Comments of Bagshot." The false air of moderation and persuasiveness which

hangs over it all merely disguises and makes more dangerous the real tendency which underlies it. The man who wrote the "imaginary preface" to the unwritten treatise on Political Economy is a Socialist, and you know it. Nothing could be more threatening to property than to dissolve a man's solid possessions into a mystical idea of power over his fellow-men, and if this gets into the head of Socialists and agitators I should be alarmed for the consequences. And so on throughout these "Comments." With a false urbanity to people of his own class, Bagshot invariably contrives to suggest that they are in the wrong, and that they may think themselves exceedingly lucky that the mob don't rise and set them right. I have watched him carefully, feeling sure that before we had done with him he would give himself away, and sure enough he did in the instalment which you published about a month ago. "There are two classes of politicians," you quote him as saying, "those who use extreme language about moderate proposals and those who use moderate language

about extreme proposals. It is always well in dealing with the British public that your language should be most moderate when your proposals are most extreme." There, Sir, at last the cat was out of the bag. It is an exact description of Bagshot's own method, He is for ever wrapping up extreme proposals in a false moderation of language and then asking you to see what an extremely reasonable man he is. I cannot profess to regret that he is dead or that his occupations prevented him from being either a politician or a serious writer in his lifetime. Such a man in public life would have been even more dangerous than Lloyd George.

His "Academic Bias"

I need scarcely go on to say that my poor friend has got involved in the current controversy about academic people. Among my letters is one pointing the finger of scorn at him as "just the sort of academic man that the Oxford and Cambridge conspiracy loves to hoist over the heads of practical people." "Of course," says another, "he was at the Board of Education." Well, he wasn't at the Board of

Education, for in his younger days he wasn't thought good enough for it, and, though there were times when, to my knowledge, he would have liked, above all things, to be there, he never had the chance in later life. But he was not of the class whom academic people consider to be distinguished sons of a university. His academic successes were quite moderate; he was far below the standard of a college fellowship, and he never spent a consecutive week at Oxford after he went down at the end of his four years. Certainly, he did all his life carry on the reading which he began there, and was always deeply grateful to the teachers who had put him on the road, but he never regarded his university education as more than a means to practical ends, or his performances at Oxford as other than the crude beginnings of a young man. If it will give any satisfaction to my correspondents, I can assure them that he was extremely suspicious of academic claims in his own department, and that, in the last years of his life, he foresaw a storm rising against the older universities, unless they either largely abated the claims which they

made for their members or greatly enlarged the scope of their efforts.

It would be ridiculous for me to spend time in proving that my friend was not, in his own way, a cultivated man—as if that were really to his discredit—but I should have thought I had quoted enough from his "Comments" to show that he attached no inordinate value to mere culture as an element in life. Let me add a passage from a letter to his nephew, written in 1904, which bears on this subject:

His Idea of Culture

> The prevailing idea of culture leads to a small number of people specializing in what should be an element in all lives. At the top of English society is a coterie of highly cultivated people, who in refinement of taste and intellectual activity are the equal of any similar class in the world, but instead of spreading the light, they regard it as a sacred flame to be kept alive in the inner sanctuary of their own temple. I should like these hierophants to be turned loose into the popular press and compelled to make a living by writing for it on the popular level. The failure to touch the com-

mon mind, upon which our cultivated people appear to pride themselves, is not, as they imagine, a sign of their superiority, but rather a clear proof of the inadequacy of their ideal. Culture invariably dies, unless refreshed by the common intelligence, and before it dies it very frequently becomes corrupt.

His "Untrained Mind"

I have several letters before me from theologians and scientific people who complain of the incursions of Bagshot's "untrained mind" upon their preserves. His cautious questionings of certain scientific beliefs are specially resented, and I am referred to many high authorities who will confute what, I am told, are "heresies arising out of ignorance." Bagshot, I must confess, was rather bold in this respect. He took great pains to inform himself about the general conclusions of scientific research but he would never accept them unless he could make sense of them in his own way. In excuse for him it may be said that he lived through a period in which scientific dogmatists were for ever turning each other inside-out, and he saw no reason why a

layman should not occasionally take a hand. It was one of his maxims that the conclusions of specialists about their special branches of study were always to be regarded with suspicion. "No man can be trusted," he wrote to me on one occasion, "to write a book on a subject on which he is the sole authority. H., you say, must be right, because no one else understands the subject. On the contrary, the chances are ten to one that H. is wrong, and that he is either deceiving himself or deceiving the public." I suppose I shall get Bagshot into a worse scrape if I go on to quote another passage from the same letter:

And Objection to Specialists

> Specialism is quite often only another name for monomania. I have known few specialists whose special study was not an *idée fixe*. I met a man at the Maloja last month who called himself a craniologist, and he was for ever manœuvring to get furtive glances at our skulls from different points of view. His interest in human beings was solely to discover whether they were brachycephalous, dolichocephalous, microcephalous, or macrocephalous; and

he unblushingly ascribed the amiable eccentricities of our friend F. to an amorphous dolichocephalism of his cranium. At first I took it to be his humour, but it gradually became evident that he had positively no other way of expressing himself, and no thoughts which corresponded to any other kind of expression.

Cave hominem unius libri. I am not sure I know what this means. I have heard it translated, beware of the man who knows one book, for he is a formidable fellow. For myself I render it: shun the man who prates of one book, for he is a bore. If the Bible satisfies a man, it is precisely because it is not one book, but many books.

Still, let us be patient and tender with these lunatics. They are the necessary martyrs to science and learning, whose service is always very perilous to the reason. Only, when they try to domineer over us, let us never forget that they *are* insane—*i.e.*, in the strict sense of the word not *whole* men.

After this, I am afraid it is useless to reply to

the correspondent who upbraids Bagshot for encouraging the "vice of discursiveness."

A Woman's Opinion

The theologians I must leave aside, and, if I get to work on the other correspondents who question Bagshot's politics, his style, and his views of life, I should never make an end. On all these subjects he must be left to speak for himself, if he has anything worth saying. He would turn in his grave if I posed him as a prophet who would resent contradiction or as a literary man who prided himself on his style. His sense of the difficulty of saying what he wanted to say, and nothing else and nothing more, was almost a superstition with him, and his notebooks at first were merely a private effort to overcome what he recognized as a special defect in himself. As for contradiction and criticism, he could seldom be got to talk unless flatly contradicted. He was, I think, a man of stubborn conviction and no little obstinacy in getting his own way. But these qualities were overlaid with a rather misleading evenness of temper which at times caused considerable exasperation to his friends. I have stumbled upon a letter from the lady mentioned in the first chapter

of the present selections, one passage in which will bear quoting. "Nothing," she says, "would induce me to marry a man who keeps his temper when I lose mine." With that I leave him, and the reader must decide whether it was a virtue or a vice.

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